

HER SIXTEENTH YEAR

HELEN
DAWES
BROWN



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By Helen Dawes Brown.

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HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK.

Her Sixteenth Year

BY

HELEN DAWES BROWN



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1901

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Published October, 1901

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HER SIXTEENTH YEAR

I

THE PASSING OF LITTLE MISS PHŒBE GAY

IN the north chamber sat the village dress-maker, for a momentous springtime had arrived. Said my mother, "The great thing to accomplish this spring is to put Phœbe Gay into long dresses. And it is quite time she did up her hair."

I danced for joy, and gave my two long braids a last fling.

"It is time we treated her as a woman grown. Do you notice we have all dropped her old name, 'Little Miss Phœbe Gay'? Nobody calls her so now."

"The idea!" I cried, and sat up tall in my chair.

My mother looked at me. "My baby is gone, — my last baby."

I laughed unfeelingly.

"She is fifteen this week," said my mother tremulously.

"And a well-grown girl," which was as much of a compliment as my grandmother ever thought good for us.

I dearly loved my three older sisters, but I had always felt their overhanging superiority, since the day they first bent over my cradle. When I was ten, my eldest sister Lilian was married, and had since lived on Main Street; and the past winter, there had been another wedding, when the second sister left us to go to her new home in the West. The third Callender daughter, bereaved by the loss, had spent most of her time visiting her sister since the wedding took place. So it happened that only my grandmother, my mother, and I sat down to the conference upon spring clothes.

"A few alterations," said my grandmother cheerfully, "will be all I shall want. I don't expect to need many more dresses in this world. What I've got will carry me through."

"I'm sure, if it were n't for the children's

insisting," my mother continued, "there would be little to buy for myself. Well, Phœbe, let Miss Dart take your measure for long skirts."

I jumped to my feet. It was a great moment.

"You must stand still, dear."

"She feels so happy, I s'pose," explained Miss Dart, with pins in her mouth. "Can't hardly stand still, she's so happy. I was just that way myself at her age. They little know all that's before 'em. It's just as well they don't. I was as lively as that child once," pointing at me with her scissors. "Now, if I can keep the rheumatism out of my fingers, that's about all I ask."

It was hard to imagine that little, weather-beaten Miss Dart had ever been fifteen. I never could quite understand how a person so old could have ideas about the new fashions. But I soon gathered from some remarks of hers that she herself was pitying me for my youth. She talked across me to my mother.

"They don't hardly know what they do want, — so young. They're apt to *think* they do." This was just as she stuck a pin

into me. "Oh, did I prick you?" asked Miss Dart, with surprise and not a bit of apology. "She's so young yet," she continued, "we'd better leave her plenty of room to grow."

This angered me. "I am just exactly as tall as my mother." I looked into mamma's eyes, to prove it. They were sad still, and she said softly, "Oh, little Miss Phœbe Gay, how can I let you go away from me forever? How can I even be sure I shall remember you?"

"Think of the comfort of a grown-up daughter to rely on," said my grandmother.

"It is n't the same. I can never have her back. It ends a happy time."

I had a hard heart, for I heard this with delight. The motherly little Phœbe Gay that cuddled her dolls might have had some sympathy with her own mother, but not this new Phœbe Gay, all absorbed in the happiness of growing up.

How the cutting, and snipping, and fitting, and sewing went on for the next few weeks does not need to be related, but I should like to mention that Miss Dart and I became quite

friendly: I pitied her less for her age, and she pitied me less for my youth. I found that she could still laugh, and that it was fun to make her. She had to apologize as often as my grandmother entered the room. "I don't know what you think o' me, Mis' Wise. Somehow she sets me off."

"I'm afraid she talks too much. You must make her useful. Phœbe's quick with her needle."

By the end of Miss Dart's visit, there lay upon the great spare-room bed a gray spring dress, a blue and white checked silk, three or four muslins and gingham with colors like the flowers, — and all these dresses were *forty-one inches* from belt to hem! When my hat with the pink roses came home from the milliner, I twisted up my braids, and stood before my family. Miss Dart said, — no, I can never tell what she said.

"Phœbe is so unspoiled, I can't bear to have her get ideas," I could just hear from my mother. I at once determined with all my heart and soul to *be* unspoiled, whatever that might mean.

“To make a girl think just enough about herself, and not too much,” Lilian continued wisely to my mother, “that is the problem for mothers and teachers.”

On the day that Miss Dart left us, I did up my hair, put on a new pink gingham, and tried to come down to supper as if nothing had happened.

My brother Tom was the first one. He pretended that words could not express it, — only bows to the earth and casting up of the eyes. My grandfather was nearly as bad. With hand on heart, he bowed and kissed my hand. “Young Phoebe Gay! I salute you.” I think my grandfather was about to add something complimentary, when my grandmother spoke firmly, “A gingham makes a good useful dress for the summer time.” At which the gentlemen of the family laughed.

“Excellent to wash,” grandma persisted, while I took my place at table in the stately, grown-up manner I now cultivated.

My sister Lilian declared that youth was the time for enjoyment of roses in one’s hat, and I quite agreed with her: after twenty,

one would naturally feel less interest in such things, and by twenty-five, would take to the ways of her elders, dress soberly, never go too far or stay too long, prefer work to play, eat only what was wholesome, and for recreation read biographies in dull bindings. In the meantime! That bright upward slope of the teens — straight up to “sweet and twenty” — lay before me like a picture on an old fan, with figures dancing and tossing flowers, amid streams and gardens, in perpetual morning. This was when I shut my eyes; when I opened them, I saw before me a vista of “good times,” tempered by “school.”

Yet school had begun this year to seem to me somehow different. I hardly know what happened to me: it must have happened in my sleep. I believe I had before this given my parents considerable anxiety. “Phœbe seems a bright child at home, but look at her school reports.”

My school reports sat very lightly upon me, up to the age of fifteen. I think pride awoke first. It did not please me that a passage of Virgil should be passed from me to a boy at the

other end of the class ; nor, when I presented my report at home, did I enjoy standing by while jokes were made about my scholarship. The consequence was that one day the schoolmaster stopped at our garden gate and spoke to my father. Oh, how could I help listening ? Who would n't have listened ?

“ Your sweet peas are doing finely, Mr. Callender.”

There was talk of gardening, and I was just about to leave my window, when I heard my father saying agreeably, “ A good deal in your line, sir, — bending the young twig, — training the young vine, so to speak.”

The schoolmaster had heard these metaphors before, and nodded familiarly to the sweet peas.

“ Ah, to be sure, sir. You have a young daughter ” — Now the schoolmaster, with all his gravity, was young himself, and need not have thought it necessary to mention my youth.

“ There has been a marked improvement.” I ached with listening, but that was all I could hear.

"I'm sure — I'm sure — very gratifying," my father was saying, and to cover his retreat from the compliment, he pressed a bunch of sweet peas upon the young school-master.

"She has begun to assimilate," I heard.

I looked "assimilate" out in the dictionary, and found that it was true.

I had been that year promoted to the upper room of the High School. If anything could make education a fair and winning thing, it might have been that bright room, with its pictures and casts and books and growing plants. We owed its beauty, to quote the "Still Waters Pilot," "to the generosity of our enlightened and public-spirited fellow citizen, Erastus B. Fay." Out of his store of foreign photographs, Mr. Fay had presented a number to our school, and when we young New Englanders raised our eyes from our books, they rested on the towers of Florence, or upon the face of a Madonna.

"Do you suppose you will ever *go*?" whispered one to another. "Europe" — word of charm and power — was spoken

reverently among these little far-away Americans.

Two or three casts had been bestowed upon us, but these met with less favor than the photographs. Sorry little Philistines walked around an antique statue, and sniffed, "Should you want such a thing in your house?" They decorated a goddess of high renown with lost articles. I was promptly dealt with for tying a stray hair-ribbon around her Grecian knot, and Cora Duffin suffered for having bestowed on her a garter. We could see no beauty in a figure without its full number of arms and legs, and a photograph of a magnificent torso was our special scorn.

"It gives me the horrors!" said Cora Duffin.

Meanwhile, at home, too, there were all sorts of little promotions, — new powers and privileges that my wise mother conferred upon me. She made me a new place in the household, with duties and perquisites attached. From the date of my fifteenth birthday, I was given the linen closet for my charge, and set about

embroidering "C" on the towels with furious energy. I was housekeeper with full authority while my mother went away for her annual "vacation." Not that I had any lack of advice and support, with Tom and my grandmother at hand. It would have taken more than Nora and me and the cook-book to supply all the dishes Tom called for, especially on the occasion when he wanted to give a "spread" and I let him.

I quite forgave my dear grandmother for all the good counsel she bestowed upon me, since on my mother's return she did nothing but praise me.

"Phœbe is learning to make her head save her heels, which is the great thing in house-keeping."

"Phœbe has a good deal of her grandmother in her," my mother answered.

"And of her grandfather. I can see business faculty. Phœbe will be a good manager when she has a home of her own. She organizes herself when she's got a day before her."

It was certainly handsome of my grand-

mother to say nothing about my grand attempt at currant jelly, which never "jelled," and had to be used for pudding sauce ; or my desire to surprise the family with original desserts, which afterwards made the chickens very ill ; or my zeal for fireplace decorations, which set the chimney on fire. I had, in common honesty, to protest against some of her praise, and she retorted, —

“ ‘ Knowledge is proud that he has learnt so much,
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.’ ”

She repeated this impressively, for she thought Cowper almost as great a poet as Pope, and both only second to the Bible. The Scriptures she quoted with humor and relish as well as piety. Her life was full of praise, and she gave thanks before many more events than her daily meals. She had a system of ascription and benediction, oftenest expressed by quotations from the Psalms. In fact, my earliest impression of the Psalms was that they were the natural speech of grandparents, and to this day I cannot separate the voice of the psalmist from the hearty tones of my grandmother : “ Bless the Lord, O my soul,

and forget not all his benefits." The ingenuity of her thankfulness was such that no matter what befell us, she saw reason to rejoice that it was not something else.

I had heard my sisters complain that Still Waters was a dull town, but it was never dull to me in that sixteenth year of my age, when one great piece of excitement was simply growing older. Some day to be sixteen instead of fifteen, and even eighteen and twenty, if I waited patiently! There was excitement in the passing of the year, from summer to autumn, from autumn to winter.

Other things happened, however, besides the growing up of boys and girls, and of these other things I shall tell.

II

FLORENCE FAY AND I

FLORENCE FAY and I had been friends ever since we had gone to dancing-school together at the age of ten. Now we were both fifteen, and began to talk seriously about friendship. Florence read essays and poetry about it, and reported them to me ; but long before we heard of Bacon's essay, we had found out for ourselves that friendship doubleth even the joys of schoolgirls and cutteth their griefs, too, in halves.

"What do people do who have n't friends," I sighed, — "who have n't anybody to speak to — anybody even to say 'Oh' to!"

"We'll keep each other to say 'Oh' to, always and forever," said Florence; "every kind of 'Oh,' as long as we live."

"Oh, Florence!" I began promptly, and renewed my vows of friendship, which we did

pretty regularly once a day, by word or letter. For, though Florence and I could meet as often as we liked, we pretended there were difficulties in our way. Sitting in full sight of each other at school, we scratched notes desperately, and with great waste of ingenuity got them back and forth across the room. Thus we made all appointments, and managed to give zest to meeting at recess, or in the afternoon at her house or mine. It was surprising, the amount of business that arose between us, and that could not wait through the next recitation. Notes of all shapes and sizes flew back and forth, till the day came that was sure to come. It would have been a man of far less intelligence than our grave young schoolmaster who would not have seen what was taking place. I think Mr. Danvers put off detection as long as he dared, and then suddenly made a dutiful effort for law and order. He stopped a Greek recitation, five boys who were reciting Homer, and who were delighted to be interrupted.

“Miss Callender, will you bring me whatever you have there?”

It was a beautiful quotation about friendship that Florence had just forwarded to me.

Those five boys fixed their eyes upon me, and one of them — I was never sure afterwards which one to avoid — snickered outright. Would the schoolmaster read it? Worse, would he read it aloud? My face grew redder and hotter, and hotter and redder. It was one of the few occasions on which I did not enjoy looking tall and grown-up. I should have been glad enough to shrink back into a little girl in that long walk from my desk to the master's, with the eyes of all the school upon me. The size of the pupils diminished as I approached the front, but it was the grinning youngsters in the first row that afflicted me most. Mr. Danvers was one of those teachers who punish by silences. He made use of one now, and I had stood some seconds in front of his desk before he said, "You may throw it into the fire. Thorne, go on : the fifty-third line."

At recess, Florence threw her arms about me. "I ought to have been the one. It was

I that sent it. I am going now to tell him. Why should you bear all ? ”

Tom began to tell this little story at the supper-table, but I must have given him a heart-rending look, for he stopped short. I realized then that he, too, was getting older, and that out of a teasing boy was growing up a gentleman.

Florence Fay, after five years of entreaties, had persuaded her parents to dispense with her governess, and to send her to the High School.

“ Quite in the democratic spirit of this little town,” Mrs. Fay apologized.

To the High School Florence was now daily conveyed in the Fay carriage, and it was one of the great “improvements,” as I expressed it, of my sixteenth year. I not only loved but I admired Florence Fay, for she was far cleverer than I. She was a long way ahead of me in Latin. She had read odes of Horace, and tried to prove to me that they were pretty. I failed to see how anything could be pretty that contained subjunctives liable to explanation ; nor did Horace’s view

of life appear to me at all that inculcated by my grandmother. I was a little alarmed that Florence entered into it so readily. She had also read those last six books of Virgil, into which no High School boy had ever penetrated, — since they were not “down” in college examinations. Florence Fay was the only person I had ever known who read such things because she wanted to. This might have made her very disagreeable, if it had not been for the great number of other things that she could not do, and that kept her humble. It was Florence’s misfortune, and one that has affected all her life, that she did not do what other girls did. She was made miserable by games, especially by outdoor games. She could not skate, or row, or ride ; and she gave up dancing, finally, as too complicated and distressing an exercise. Florence Fay has had “good times” in her own way, and nobody needs to pity her now, but just when she was fifteen she missed the best part of it, I thought. So, while I could not have forgiven any other girl for knowing so much, I was proud of Florence’s store of Latin and

her love of Shakespeare. I had not been a reading child : life had been too active at the age of ten. There were things to be done from morning till night ; things to read could wait. Grown-up people had plainly more leisure than little Miss Phœbe Gay.

But now, so fond I was of Florence Fay that I resigned some of my outdoor occupations in Tom's company, went home from school with Florence, and sat the long afternoon in the Fays' great library. It used to be said that I was getting my education at the Still Waters High School, but a large part of it I am sure I got from Florence Fay, and another large part from my brother Tom.

At least, I began to feel the charm of the outside of literature in the library of Mr. Fay, and most of all when the afternoon sun struck across the room upon the long rows of books. Here, too, were photographs and casts like those I had learned to look at while at school. There was a deep, still carpet, and there were the softest crimson chairs, and, in a town of air-tight stoves, the wonder of an open wood fire. On a November afternoon

Tom might have his boys for company, I sighed contentedly, as Florence Fay and I buried ourselves in Waverley novels.

I also admired Florence Fay because she was as good as she was clever. She had ingenious devices for being good, which she sometimes confided to me, and persuaded me to join her in carrying out. Such was "seeing how many people you can make happy in one day."

"You never can tell, unless they are children," I objected; "but it would be fun to try it."

"From eight o'clock till eight o'clock."

One day we each wrote out at considerable length what kind of woman we should like to be, and sealed what we had written, using a great deal of red sealing-wax to make it impressive. The documents were then locked up, and we went about our business. "Those are our sealed orders," said Florence, "to be opened when we are twenty-one."

When Lent was just beginning, Florence proposed, "Let's deny ourselves saying unkind things about anybody, no matter if they

are funny. Just simply be polite to people behind their backs."

"Just simply! It is easy for you, but terrible for me."

To deny my tongue was, indeed, sacrifice. Discretion in speech from my earliest years had had to be preached to me. "'Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from trouble,'" quoted my grandmother. She added a secular verse, which she made me learn by heart, —

"'If wisdom's way you wisely seek,
Five things observe with care :
Of whom you speak,
To whom you speak,
And how and when and where.'"

"I read a story once," Florence told me, "about a homely, disagreeable little girl, who went to the fairies to make her pretty. They told her not to do anything disagreeable for a month, and come back and look into a mirror. You've no idea how much better-looking she had grown. Next they told her not to say anything disagreeable for two months, and then come back and look into the mirror ;

and, sure enough, she was pretty by that time. Then they told her not to think anything disagreeable for three months, — fancy it! — and then come back again and look into the mirror; and, do you believe it, she was perfectly beautiful!”

I must tell the whole truth: Florence and I did sometimes quarrel. I was emphatic and impulsive, and said things with about ten times the force they needed. Florence listened, sensitive and silent, — “touchy,” I called her once, and spent days repenting. If I offended her, she said not a word. I was not wise enough to reflect that Florence had been a lonely child, with an invalid mother and a grave, preoccupied father. She had kept her thoughts to herself till our friendship grew up; and even then the least lack of sympathy between us brought on her reserve. Perhaps I had been noisy about some of my opinions, or perhaps I had gone home from school two nights in succession with Eva West, who was my second-best friend and my next-door neighbor. One of Florence Fay’s silences would come on, and

would afflict me sorely. She was a far more complicated being than I was, and I had no experience to judge her by. "Florence is an only child," I had heard my mother say gently more than once. She would add to my father, "I hope our children have learned the art of living with others simply by growing up in a large family."

Florence and I had so true an affection for each other that it carried us safely through many misunderstandings. The sixteenth year of our lives was a great year of our friendship. It was crowded with events between Florence and me. One great event was that the future suddenly opened before us both. As little girls, we had lived from to-day till to-morrow; now we lived in the next ten years, for girls of fifteen can seldom see beyond twenty-five. The first business of those ten years was education, — upon that I had to agree with Florence. She wished to go to college, and wished it with a passion that puzzled me.

"My *life* depends on it — my whole life."

"You're so intellectual already, Florence."

"Oh, am I?" said Florence apologeti-

cally. "You have so many things to care about, Phœbe. I have only that, and my father and mother. I read the college catalogues, and read them. I want to study *everything*! Oh, you don't know how those catalogues make me feel," and dear Florence Fay actually had tears in her eyes; "for I can never go, Phœbe. It would be wicked. I must stay with my sick mother and my father. It is right, I know it is right, and I could n't leave them for anything, but, Phœbe, it is the hardest thing I ever did yet in all my life," and Florence's lip quivered.

College catalogues had never roused such sentiment in me, and I could only listen and wonder.

"I began to want to go when I was ten years old, and papa said I could, but now, lately, I know I ought not. I was n't old enough then to understand what was selfish and what was n't."

I tried to think of comforting arguments against college.

"Cora Duffin is fitting. She says she is n't going to let a lot of boys get ahead of *her*.

If Cora Duffin goes to college, that is enough for me."

This speech had no effect, and certainly deserved none.

"College is nothing but school going on and on, till you're too old to have any fun."

I did not quite believe that, but I put it strongly for the sake of Florence.

"Fun, — I know what kind of fun you mean, Phoebe. Parties and dancing and boys are nothing to me," said Florence miserably; "particularly boys."

"You don't know," I answered sagely. "You have only seen the boys round here. Though my brother Tom will be a fine young man some day — but not your style, Florence. You must have a poet."

We occasionally talked about Love as well as Friendship. I was shy of the subject, and took a firm stand for common sense. Florence again disagreed, and stood boldly out for romance.

"You are romantic, Florence," I remarked severely. "So far as I know, I'm *not*."

The truth was that Florence Fay had the

most beautiful theories of romance, read "Romeo and Juliet," and dreamed and sighed, and then — fled even from my brother Tom. I had so many brothers and cousins that I was rather skeptical about falling in love, in every-day life, with one of these plain creatures in ugly clothes, who said so little that was brilliant. Yet there were Roger and Lilian, and there were my father and mother, and above all, there were those old lovers, grandpa and grandma. I began to ponder, and then to dream.

III

A LONG STORY SHORT

THE most exciting experience of my sixteenth year lasted for about three months, but it will not take more than ten minutes to relate it. I heard my father declare that there had now come to a crisis matters that had been getting ready for ten years, and if one told the whole story, he would have to go back even farther than that. He and my grandfather had talked all winter about "labor troubles." In the spring, my father's face grew anxious. We knew vaguely that there was trouble at the shops three miles away, of which he was superintendent and chief owner.

"It is a deadlock, — ruin to them and ruin to me ;" so said my father at last.

"It is impossible to comply with their demands," he went on, speaking fast in a

worried voice. "The work can't go on that they say must go on. The company behind it has failed, and the thing must stop. I have n't the money to keep on with it. They hold me responsible, and say I have broken my promise to them."

"I can't pretend to understand it, James," sighed my mother. "What I do know is that you could never break a promise."

"There has been a grand misunderstanding. They are all unreasonable, but only a few are wicked."

"Wicked?"

"They have threatened me, — some of them. I am getting these letters every day." My father laughed, but no one else did.

"Let me read it," my mother begged, turning paler. Then my grandmother took the letter, held it off at a safe distance, and lowered her glasses at it.

"Oh, let me," I cried.

"Me, too," said Tom.

Then we all looked at one another, and my father laughed again.

"Something has got to be done," declared my grandmother. "The police, — pray, where are the police?"

"Probably leaning over our garden fence, watching the peas grow. You can't set Dogberry and Verges at such a job."

"Then where are the militia?" inquired grandma.

"Here," said Tom, straightening himself. "Company O, Tenth Massachusetts. Just you wait till you see me in my uniform. If they threaten father on his way to the shops, I'll take my gun and ride with him."

"To think of your driving every day over that road, lonely as it is, through the long stretch of woods, and across the plain. I can't *let* you, James!"

Then I spoke up. "Mother, father, I am the one. Let me ride with father every day, back and forth. Nobody will touch him if I sit beside him, just because I am young and a girl, and don't fire guns myself."

"Good for you, Phoebe!"

"No, my daughter, I could not think of such a thing," said my father gravely. "For

the matter of that, I might take a man who could fire a gun. I need n't expose my family. I carry a loaded pistol myself these days."

"Loaded!" My mother shuddered.

At last my grandmother spoke. "Phœbe has the right idea. I love Phoebe as well as anybody does, but I would let her go."

"To-morrow!" I cried.

I was so proud and glad that they would allow it! There had been times when I had been very much dissatisfied with being fifteen and no more.

"Girls!" I had heard some one say: "they are neither one thing nor the other. You can't treat them as children; you can't treat them as women. A girl is the hardest thing to define." And I heard one emphatic lady lament, "My Francesca has the makings of an excellent grandmother in her, but what is she good for now?"

Florence Fay and I were quite agreed that in our unromantic age there was little chance for a girl of fifteen to take part in heroic enterprises. Neither she nor I recognized

that Florence's daily task at home was a delicate and beautiful piece of heroism.

Probably I set a higher value than they deserved upon my services as bodyguard to my dear father, but I was wrought up to saving his life and securing the happiness and fortunes of my family. This exaltation lasted for some time ; then, I shame to tell it, a reaction came, — plain cowardice and feminine fear of bad men with firearms. Love of my father brought me back to my other self, till I felt the most privileged member of the family that I was permitted to share his danger. My mother had begged to go, but Phœbe's youth and pink ribbons would do better, grandma maintained. Tom entreated that he might "hang on behind" with his gun.

"Never will I ride with a gun !"

"Women have funny ideas about bravery, anyhow," Tom remarked wisely.

My father and I said not a word about disagreeable subjects as we rode along. He seemed uncommonly happy, and recited "Lord Ullin's Daughter" and "Young Lochinvar"

as we drove through the woods. He even sang a song or two, and as he had little voice and less ear, and knew it, this was the surest sign of happiness he ever gave. It had never occurred to me before how lonely these drives must be ; had he let me come because he longed for somebody to talk to ? I began to believe that that was all, and yet I searched every thicket for lurking villains. There was only peaceful sunlight filtering through the pine-trees. To key one's self to heroic pitch, and to have a squirrel run across the road as the sole incident of the morning, — this was the way things fell out, I had discovered, in a real world. I was half ashamed to be so light-hearted, I who had only yesterday read that gruesome letter ; but it was June and the beginning of vacation, two joyful facts I could not forget. I followed my father into his counting-room, and then, with a feeling of importance, into the inner room marked "No Admittance." I hoped the bookkeeper saw me going in.

"What fun !" I said more than once. In my fifteen-year-old vocabulary "fun" was the

most comprehensive term. "I am going to help you, papa. You will have to take me into the business."

"Set you to learning spokes and axletrees? Better sit here with a story-book and look out on the river. I shall be back before noon."

Even a room marked "No Admittance" loses its charm by the end of an hour. I had never had a taste for solitary confinement, and up I rose and put on my hat.

"Mr. Callender is out," the bookkeeper remarked, to discourage me. He did not, indeed, belong to the "encouragers," that Mr. Dawkins; and I felt sorry for my father that he spent his time out of our sight in such dismal company.

"Oh," I thought, "*if* I could make that bookkeeper laugh once!" Now I fled from him, however.

It took all my courage to meet the eyes of people who wished my father ill; for in my fears dark looks stood next to firearms. I was taken with a great desire — a grown-up woman's feeling — to know what my father's life was like, to learn how better to sympa-

thize with it. I saw faces that to my fancy were grim with enmity ; very likely it was only with the effort to get a line straight or an edge true. The women stenciling fine lines on hubs and spokes did smile as I passed, and I heard one say, "It's a nine-penny gingham she's got on. Some say he has n't got the money." By the time I came back to the counting-room I had matter for long talk with Florence Fay.

My father entered soon with troubled face. "They have broken up the work that was half done. Fools!"

"It was what I said they'd do," the book-keeper remarked dismally.

I disappeared behind "No Admittance."

"Papa," I called, opening the door suddenly five minutes after, "come to lunch."

"Oh, I can't stop to eat, my child."

"Just come and look, even if you don't eat."

On a little table I had set out as pretty a lunch as ever was carried in a basket. "Cold coffee and chicken and cake ; and see, I picked some flowers. And here is your chair, and

here is mine. Why, papa, I never spent one of your real days with you before, — only holidays. How I shall get acquainted with you ! ”

The harassed look went away, and my father rose from the table, as he looked and declared, a new man.

“ I am going to give a piece of cake to Mr. Bookkeeper,” I cried.

“ I am much obliged to you,” said he, without moving a muscle. “ Cake don’t agree with me.”

I had been making up my mind to something. I went back to the women who were stenciling.

“ It is my vacation,” I began, “ and I wish I could earn some money,” which was true enough.

They smiled upon me. “ You ’ll have to ask the foreman.”

“ Wal, yes, I can give yer a job, miss,” answered the foreman, and entered into the affair delightfully, considering that he was one of the most troublesome men my father had to deal with. I turned up my gown,

tied on a piece of burlaps for apron, and earned thirty-two cents.

"I supposed you were asleep," my father said; "but if you want work, here's work enough in this office."

"Is she good at figures?" asked the book-keeper gloomily.

Arrived home, I gave a gay account of my day, and the next morning, insisted on driving away with my father as before. There had been another letter. I had laughed at the spelling, but, oh, I dreaded the ride through the pines.

"Say 'Young Lochinvar,' papa," I begged, as we entered the woods.

"'Oh, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best;
And save his good broadsword he weapons had none,
He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.
So faithful in love and so dauntless in war,
There never was knight like young Lochinvar.'"

Young Lochinvar had captured my heart, so far as I had a heart at fifteen, and usually my thoughts went flying off after that gallant youth. But now I dropped him; I

could think only of what might be beyond the bend in the road, and to cover my fears, I sang.

“That is a sweet song,” my father murmured. “I remember” —

I did not hear, for I saw too much. Lying low in the underbrush, and all but hidden by a great sumach, was a brown heap of clothes. A ray of light struck into the thicket, and there was flash of eyes and gleam of metal. Those angry eyes were fixed on me, not on my father. In an instant we were past, and I was finishing my song.

“Did n’t you *see* them, papa?” I whispered, as we alighted.

“See what, my dear?”

“The men that wrote the letters,” I whispered again.

My father turned pale — for me. “I have done wrong. I should never have allowed this.”

“He looked straight at me, and he saw I was a girl, and he could n’t — that was all.”

“This shall not happen again,” said my father. Nor did it, though the ride through

the woods happened again and for many a day.

My father set me a task in his office : the making out of the pay-rolls, subject to Mr. Dawkins's mournful supervision. On Saturday afternoon I handed to each workman his pay through a little window : I tried to be a grave business woman, but smiles broke it up. I suppose nowadays you would call me a cashier : I felt like a princess.

"Phœbe," Tom complained, "you're cutting me out. Don't you forget it, father, I'm the one who's to be junior partner soon as I'm out of college."

My hardest task was the conquest of the bookkeeper. If I had any success, it was Nora, the cook, not I, who should have the credit. It was my theory of Mr. Dawkins that he had spoiled his temper by skipping his midday meal, and eating doughnuts at odd times. We invited him to share our lunch ; and how he refused at first, then grumbled and took a bite, next sat down and ate in silence, and *finally* laughed with his mouth full, would take too long to tell. He became

so friendly with me that he called me "Miss Phœbe Gay," "for gay you are, miss," — and seemed to think he had made a joke, his only joke so long as I knew him.

I wonder what was the truth about that summer, — whether I helped or hindered. The one thing I am sure and glad of is that I grew to know my father as I had never had the chance to do before.

The time of danger passed. A few persons had spread discontent, and now a few, awakening to reason, labored to instill content, and at any rate patience. I think it dawned upon his employees that my father was as hard-working as any of them.

"I wish," my mother sighed, "that your father found it easier to talk with his people. He is a quiet man ; he does n't let them know him."

I suppose it might be said that I did let them know me, and I am sure they let me know them down to the newest baby. By the end of the summer, my social interests were divided between Still Waters Centre and the east end of the town. The weddings and

funerals, the merry-makings and the misfortunes of the wagon-shop society were now added to my world.

The best was when my father declared that my spirits had kept up his through that trying summer, and my grandmother chimed in, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine."

IV

UNCLE OLIVER

“UNCLE OLIVER is coming to visit us at last,” my mother announced, as she read a large square single-sheet letter.

This was enough to think about for one day.

My uncle Oliver was my mother's youngest brother, long absent in the West. We knew him by an annual box of Christmas gifts for his sister's large family of children. He owned to keeping a list of us pinned on a closet door. Was not that a bachelor uncle to rejoice in? To be sure, the little Callenders sometimes thought they did their share, in penning year after year painful letters of thanks to this uncle whom most of them had never known. A day or two after Christmas, we might have been seen consigned to different corners, pen grasped tight, and

dipped deep and often, while we stared with vacant eyes and rolling tongues at a blank sheet headed, "My dear uncle Oliver." It was a price to pay, we thought, for sundry dolls, books, and jumping-jacks; and uncle Oliver handsomely acknowledged, years after, that his collection of letters from the youthful Callenders was worth a good fifty dollars spent in toys once a year. He showed me my series, when I was well out of my teens, a series that began with print at the age of four, continuing to a very genteel note on monogram paper at the age of twenty.

I was now fifteen, and I was to see uncle Oliver for the first time.

"Is n't he going to bring a bride with him on this visit?" asked my father. "It's high time Oliver thought of marrying. Oliver must be" —

"Thirty-eight, this twenty-third day of May," spoke my grandmother. "I hope to live to see him with an excellent wife yet. Oliver is a good boy."

"A good boy!" this elderly uncle! I laughed to myself.

I thought a great deal about the arrival of my stranger uncle. He afforded me an entirely new kind of excitement. What should we think of him? what would he think of us? In my foolish little heart, I longed that uncle Oliver should have a high opinion of me, in particular. I wished to surprise him with a niece in full bloom, for I knew by the nature of my last Christmas gift that he regarded me still as a child. It was a doll's merry-go-round, marked "For little Miss Phœbe Gay." Uncle Oliver should see that I was in every respect a grown-up young lady. I stood straight and tall before my glass, and turned my chin up with a haughty air that I fancied became a person of twenty-five. I planned what I should say when uncle Oliver arrived and asked (as he probably would) for *little* Miss Phœbe Gay. I should step forward gracefully to welcome him, and should inquire if he had had a pleasant journey. That would punish him for the merry-go-round! Still tall and dignified, I should conduct my uncle to the spare room, and should leave him too astonished to speak.

Dignity was to be my strong point; I was not to spoil the effect by laughing, as I often did. I had been so long impressed on uncle Oliver's mind as "the youngest of nine," at the foot of the list on his closet door, that I was determined to do away with that idea once for all. Only lately he had made some jocose reference to my spelling, but I should now convey to him that I was in the Sixth Book of Virgil. When I talked with him about my last physics lesson, it was to be hoped he would forget that dreadful episode of "fastenating." For, one time when I had used that word, uncle Oliver had written a reply, in which it occurred more than once spelled in my way, not his. What shame to me that I did not notice it myself, but let the family read the letter, horror-struck at the lapse in uncle Oliver's usually infallible spelling! It took all the honor I had in me to tell them the humiliating truth.

On the afternoon of uncle Oliver's arrival, I did up my hair very high, tossed my head, and stood a little taller than my mother, as we waited in the doorway. If I looked older

than my uncle expected, — though he gave me no satisfaction on this point, — he himself looked much younger ; quite like a young man, in fact. My mother and grandmother so monopolized their “ boy ” that I got no attention at all. Toilet and dignity went for nothing.

“ Hullo, so this is Phœbe,” and then my uncle turned again to grandma.

Even Tom had more notice, and of just the kind I wanted. “ Tom, this big fellow ? ” and then it was grandma again.

This was only the first night, however. Within twenty-four hours, we were friends. When uncle Oliver told his stories, he told the first part to grandma, and the end to me.

“ He takes greatly to Phœbe,” said my grandmother, “ but I can’t see that he gives her a chance to say a word.” One day it seemed to occur to uncle Oliver that he had not heard much of my side of life.

“ See here, Phœbe, why don’t you talk ? ” Uncle Oliver lit a cigar, which was the way he fortified himself for listening. “ School, I

suppose, is the main topic at present. Pray what do you learn at school?"

"Geometry, Rhetoric, French, Latin, Physics, Elocution."

Uncle Oliver meditated. Evidently I had made my impression at last. Further to elevate the conversation, I asked, "Uncle Oliver, do you believe in the Higher Education of Women?"

"I believe in every human being's getting all the education he can take. Those are all the views on education I have. What do you say yourself?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," I answered feebly, for Monday's lessons loomed up before me.

"How about Geometry, Phœbe?"

I gave a fluent account of my accomplishments in Geometry.

"Not bad," meditated uncle Oliver; "concentrates a woman's wandering wits, pins her down, forces her to be accurate, makes a more reasonable being of her, — easier to live with. Sweet reasonableness ought to be the outcome of Geometry. Go on, Phœbe."

I had not listened so meekly as I might

have to these remarks. Indeed ! did he think I was in need of pinning down ? Nevertheless, I gave an account of myself in Latin : Cæsar, Cicero, Virgil, each in small and carefully measured quantities.

Uncle Oliver listened respectfully. "That's all right ; good for a woman's mind."

"It seems to me you don't think much of women's minds, uncle Oliver," I answered with some spirit. He was absorbed in disposing of his cigar ash, and did not reply. Ah, I said to myself, that is the reason uncle Oliver never married, because he thinks so poorly of women's minds. More than ever, I desired him to think well of mine, and I recited a list of French books that I had read.

"So far so good, Phœbe. Could you explain to the proper official that you wanted your baggage locked up at the railway station for two hours, while you went to see the cathedral ?"

I stared, and shook my head. Uncle Oliver listened a little quizzically to my report of Rhetoric and Elocution, but brightened as I said, "Oh, Physics, I just love Physics."

“ Ah, I’ve got you at last.” I was glad to see his opinion of me rising. “ I know the kind of mind. You must be indulged along that line. But first, my dear young lady, before you become a linguist or a scientist, may I inquire whether you can read and write ? ”

“ *Uncle Oliver !* ”

“ Can you ? I want to know.”

“ I don’t know what you mean, uncle Oliver.”

“ If I should ever marry, it would be a woman who could read and write.”

“ I thought from what you said you believed in Higher Education.”

“ Phœbe, can you read English at sight, without stumbling or mispronouncing ? Do you know what the words mean ? I never heard you read aloud. I wonder if I should like to hear you, or would it be a penance ? ”

“ A penance,” I answered meekly.

“ If you’ve not learned to read aloud to other people, have you learned to read to yourself ? Have you learned either at home or at school to be a reader ? ”

I was not willing to say no ; I could not say yes.

“ Learn to read, Phœbe. Books will stand by you. Reading is the surest preventive of the excesses of a woman’s life, — talking, dress, society, fancy-work, pedantic house-keeping.”

Still so hard on women, I thought ; but I listened and remembered.

“ While you are learning to read, learn to write, — literally, write, — a fair, handsome hand, as good as Queen Victoria’s. English women write better than American, I half believe, because they have her example. Get a facsimile of the Queen’s handwriting, and try to put a little of that distinction into your own. And, Phœbe Gay, you must learn to spell.”

Uncle Oliver rose from his chair, and stood before me, looking so solemn that I was fairly frightened.

“ You must learn to spell,” he repeated. I wished that my genial uncle Oliver would not look at me so. “ You are not an hereditary bad speller. You come of a good spell-

ing stock. It is your own fault, and curable."

I looked up at him, and my lip quivered.

My uncle relented. "But, Phœbe Gay, spite of your spelling and your handwriting, you have written a pretty good letter since you were four years old."

I smiled faintly.

"Mind you write me one often when I go away. Reading and writing are the two necessities of life," he went on; "but you can't have charm in a woman unless you have good speech. I've heard it said the first impression lies in the bonnet. I doubt it. The first impression lies in the first sound of a woman's voice. If I were likely to marry, which I am not, I should pick out a voice."

I listened, waiting to be criticised. The conversation had taken a far different turn from that which I had planned in my young mind. I was humble enough now, and took very meekly whatever uncle Oliver saw fit to say to me. It was painfully interesting to watch him pace up and down the piazza,

thinking me over. He was evidently enjoying this little mental exercise.

“I can’t sing,” I apologized.

“Never mind your singing. Speaking and reading are far more important than singing. A woman’s voice” — And really uncle Oliver said very pretty things about a woman’s voice. Where had he heard that one that he described? Uncle Oliver surely knew some one besides Cordelia, though he did not forget to remind me of her voice, you may be sure, — that voice, “ever soft, gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.”

Uncle Oliver took Tom’s manners in hand, and quoted Chesterfield to him. Tom treated it as the best joke of the season that his manners were to be reformed, but the sober truth was that uncle Oliver’s visit did Tom a great deal of good. As we went into the dining-room, Tom would twitch my skirt, and whisper, “Manners, manners,” but he did eat more slowly, and he did look to see whether he had his knife by the blade or the handle.

“Lord Chesterfield,” began my grandmother, “according to all I’ve heard of him,

was n't in *all* respects what I should want our Tom to be like."

My uncle laughed, and my father agreed with her.

Tom's principles suffered nothing, I am sure, from uncle Oliver's reiteration of "The graces, the graces, the graces!"

It is certain that after the departure of our reforming young uncle, "the graces" were much more looked to by Tom and me, and "when uncle Oliver was here" made another epoch in our growing up. The last thing uncle Oliver did was to write in my autograph album.

"I'm no poet," he said; "I'll copy Charles Kingsley:—

'Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever.
Do noble things, not dream them, all day long :
And so make life, death, and that vast forever
One grand sweet song.'

There, Phœbe, put that and 'the graces' together. Be sure you write me one of your letters soon, Phœbe Gay."

A few months later, a letter and a photograph arrived, which threw the family into a great excitement.

“Uncle Oliver engaged to be married!”

“I wonder if she is much like Portia, and if she has a voice like Cordelia,” was my first remark.

“She must hold her knife and fork just right,” said Tom.

“And spell beautifully.”

“And never toe in.”

“I hope the dear boy has chosen wisely,” and my grandmother shed a tear or two.

“They are coming here the first of September. We must get the house and the garden in beautiful order.”

“We ’ll help ; we ’ll do it,” Tom and I cried.

We did ; she came ; and she *was* perfection, if uncle Oliver, Tom, and I were judges to be trusted.

V

TEN DOLLARS' WORTH OF FUN

I WALKED home from school much depressed. I feel ashamed to tell the reason for my low spirits. Shall I confess that they were because my dearest friend, Florence Fay, had had her room "done over," and I had been invited to inspect it that afternoon? It was all pink and white and gold, and was her last birthday present from her father. The sin of envy had possession of me. "Thou shalt not covet;" and I did covet. As my grandmother had remedies for colds and toothaches, so she had remedies to apply to sins. I had heard her prescribe for covetousness: "Think of your own mercies, to begin with." I did this now, but I could not think of so many as usual. My bedroom wall-paper and painted chamber-set nobody could have expected me to class as "mercies."

"Next be sure you are making the very most of what you have;" for my grandmother's content was always energetic.

How could I make the best of my carpet? — a faded Brussels that had made a down-hill progress through the house, from parlor, dining-room, spare room, till it had been pieced and cut over for my room? I had never cared about such things till lately. I was so used to my little room that I had never truly seen how it looked till I got my new eyes at about this time of my life. I went slowly upstairs, and found cousin Elinor sewing at my west window, for the sake of the afternoon light. Cousin Elinor was poor, plain, bright, and, said my grandmother, "has more of the Dolliver faculty than any other member of the family. She can turn her hand to anything."

I happened to know that cousin Elinor would have liked to be an artist; instead of that she "turned her hand to anything." She had come to us now on her annual sewing visit. "Universal repairer," she called herself.

"My room is n't pretty a bit, cousin Elinor."

She looked out of the window, across the little Still Waters River, to the green hills beyond it.

“So much of your room is beautiful, Phœbe Gay. Any one might envy you your view.” She thought a moment. “We might begin and work from that. Can you paint?”

“Plaques and jars?”

“No, mopboards and doors. Do you happen to understand paper-hanging?”

“Why, I never knew girls could.”

“What girls can’t do in these days! We should need a little money, not a great deal,” she said, looking the room over.

I knew that it was a year of well-organized economies in the Callender family, and new carpets were not to be thought of.

“I might take my ten dollars that uncle Oliver gave me to spend for fun. He told me if I tried to buy anything useful, I might hand it back to him. This would be fun, simply — *fun!*”

“And your mother will probably give us the freedom of the attic. With ten dollars and an attic, Phœbe, let us see what we can do.”

It is something in this world to discover an entirely new kind of fun.

"Making something out of nothing, I believe, is the best fun of all."

"Creative fun, that is, Phoebe Gay. Artistic fun," said cousin Elinor, a little wistfully.

"Are those the words? Is it so fine as that?"

The furniture was moved out to the shed chamber, and I began gleefully to tear off my old wall-paper; but in the midst of the destruction, — will you believe it? — I began to feel dreadfully that I had done it at all. I had been a little girl in that room, and this was the end of my childhood. I had watched and traced that pattern in the paper all the years I could remember, and now it was gone forever! If I could have stopped then and there, I believe I should have borne all the risk of being laughed at; but with half the poor little room peeled bare, there was no staying the ruthless work. I reduced the four walls to desolation, and fled from them for the rest of the day. My ugly little room was dead, and oh, I *had* loved it!

I had a great reputation for being "practical," and, in order to sustain it, I set to work next morning with tremendous energy.

"I shall let my pupil begin," said cousin Elinor, "by painting the mopboard behind the bed. Then no matter if her brush-marks show at first. There, go lightly over that again, and sweep it smooth. Do your work so well, Phoebe Gay, that no one will need to explain that it was done by a girl of fifteen, or even that it was done by a woman."

By the end of the morning, half the dingy woodwork had turned to pure, clear white.

"Oh, can't we begin to paper to-morrow?" I cried.

"We must be patient. This must dry, then have a second coat, then, perhaps, a third coat."

I never took such a lesson in patience as this was, — to sit down quietly and wait for paint to dry in the midst of such excitement.

Meanwhile, weighty decisions were to be made. Cousin Elinor had been in Boston lately, and reported that old-fashioned things were coming back, and that people were

reviving the old blue and white of colonial times.

"Ah, ah!" My grandmother expressed her satisfaction.

It was even rumored that "they" were going to use blue denim, at which the family held up their hands.

"*Overall* stuff! The hired man will feel set up."

An inexpensive paper was selected from Boston samples, in accordance with these strange new ideas. My grandmother was much pleased and flattered that it had a pattern in favor in her youth. I do not know that I have ever seen her more gratified than when cousin Elinor petitioned for an old bureau which had stood under the eaves in the attic, and whose drawers had been long given up to the ripening of pears.

"A bureau my mother had before I was born." Grandma's voice trembled with pleasure. "And Phœbe wants to set it up in her new room. Do you hear, grandpa?"

We gave the bureau a vigorous oiling and rubbing, and supplied it with new knobs, —

pretty oval brass knobs, that grandma told us "carried her back to her young days."

Meanwhile the three coats of white paint were hard and dry, and we made ready to begin papering. Two empty barrels were placed in my room, and on these were laid the great ironing-board, with a pan of paste, a light papering brush, a huge pair of shears, plenty of soft cloths, and "a larger supply of patience than ever."

Of course I daubed my fingers, tore the paper, streaked it and blotted it with paste, but, by the end of an hour, better results began to appear.

"It is too exciting to care about dinner," I answered, as Tom shouted up the stairway, "Hullo, up there; do you stop to eat?"

I was soon back at my matching, trimming, patting, smoothing. "There never was any fancy-work equal to this. May n't I paper every room in the house?" I cried, as the family assembled to admire.

"I'll let you paper my room," offered Tom. "I'll have my room red, bright as you can get it."

"I always said Phœbe Gay had faculty, from a child," commented my grandmother. "The same Dolliver faculty that you have, Elinor."

"Phœbe is very quick to learn," said Elinor; and I glowed with pleasure, it was so different from what I had been accustomed to hear at school.

"If Phœbe should ever have to support herself, I am glad she is so deft with her fingers."

"Oh, could n't I be a paperer or a painter?"

"Call it an interior decorator, and I think you could, Phœbe."

Under the stimulus of this praise, I could have painted the house inside and out.

Other great matters were to be decided.

"Let us paint the floor," proposed cousin Elinor, "then pick out enough of the carpet to make a square piece for the centre, enough that is bright and good. It is better to have no carpet under the bed or around the edges of the room."

My sister Lilian came over to admire.

"You shall have my old embroidered white muslin to make curtains with, Phœbe dear."

“And now let us consider furniture. Here is your painted bedstead, with the baskets of fruit on the footboard and headboard. Have you patience to paint that white? also, your washstand? also, two or three chairs? You can’t practice your art on anything more difficult than a chair, Phœbe.”

Those days with my paint-pot in the shed chamber (called “Phœbe Gay’s studio”) did, indeed, teach me patience. Furniture, I discovered, had so many out-of-the-way surfaces, sly cracks and corners, and as for chair rounds, should I ever learn to see all around them?

“We must have a day’s work of a carpenter,” said cousin Elinor. “He must strengthen the bureau and make the drawers run, construct a toilet-table out of this dry-goods case, saw off the legs of this chair, to give you one low seat, put an extra shelf into the washstand, make a bookcase out of this box, and put in two or three shelves for you in odd corners. Then you can follow him with your paint-brush.”

The white bed was at last set in its place. The bureau, restored to an honorable old age,

was the envy of Florence Fay, who came to inspect and exclaim.

“And now the toilet-table!”

This was an exceedingly pretty name, I thought, to give to an old packing-box set up on end. Underneath was a shelf for blacking and bottles, while the whole was dressed in valance and cover made from Lilian's embroidered muslin.

“Over it shall hang the old mirror we rescued from the attic. Now away with your Java canvas cushion and mats, Phœbe dear, and get some touches of old blue about your toilet-table and bureau. Only not too many things, Phœbe.” Lilian and Elinor both smiled.

For my room had been the worst to sweep and dust in all the house. I had such a passion for mementos that I never went anywhere or did anything that I did not set up some souvenir in my room. Mamma protested gently on sweeping-days, but Lilian told her that girls would be girls.

Cousin Elinor, too, tried to reform me, and reminded me that I might keep my treasures

in pretty boxes and cabinets, as princesses in olden times had done.

The finishing touches lasted all the summer. There were blue cushions for my white chairs; there was even a blue-cushioned window-seat, — another box promoted. Florence had “corners;” so must I. There was my sewing corner, by the west window. A homely little table had its blue cover, with white outline border, and the work-basket, because it wore a blue bow, gave me high satisfaction. There was my Poets’ Corner, because Florence Fay had one. On the white-painted book-shelves I had gathered my school-books and every book that had been presented to me from babyhood up. Pictures of authors and of their homes, unframed photographs and woodcuts, were grouped around my bookcase, and Florence Fay herself presented me with a bust of Tennyson to place atop of my books. Uncle Oliver gave me an autograph of Longfellow, — his name with a verse of poetry, — and that hung framed below the shelves. There was also my reading list in imitation of Florence. This was a long, narrow strip of

paper, with fancy lettering at the top, and a pencil hanging by a gay ribbon. Here, like Florence, I wrote down under each month everything I read that was not a magazine or a newspaper.

I stood off and surveyed my Poets' Corner, with head on one side.

"You would almost think I was literary, Florence."

"You are a great deal more literary than you think you are, Phœbe Gay." I listened; Florence was never more interesting than when she was explaining me to myself. "People have called you practical long enough."

"I wish I did like poetry, but I don't," I said.

"It will come to you all at once, and then you simply can't *live* without poetry."

I doubted it. No more than Audrey in the play, had the gods made me poetical.

"You can't tell. If you were to go to college — you and I — you would — you would like so many things you don't now," Florence concluded lamely.

I had not many pictures. "Let pictures

come," was cousin Elinor's advice; "don't go after them. Moreover, never hang up a picture that you don't want badly."

"Not if it has a pretty frame?" I pleaded.

"No, Phoebe Gay."

I had several gifts for my new room. My grandfather presented a waste basket, with an appropriate speech; Tom bought with his own earnings a blue and white candlestick, and I kissed him for it, hard as he tried to get away. My work-basket was mamma's present, and my dozen blue-bordered towels, my grandmother's.

"You had a great deal more fun than I did," said Florence Fay wistfully. "My room was done when I was away on a visit. I never knew a thing about it till I came home."

"And if we count the cost," cousin Elinor concluded, "paint, paper, denim, knobs, and carpenter, it is \$9.85, for I have it here in my account-book."

VI

MR. ELIPHALET LOCKER

ONE pleasant sign that I was now regarded as very nearly a grown-up person was the fact that when I sat down to sew with my mother and my grandmother, they talked upon their subjects, rather than upon mine. I shall never say that these two ladies gossiped about their neighbors; I should prefer to put it in some different way. It was with a really affectionate interest that they discussed the affairs of high and low. They knew the age of everybody in Still Waters, and their memories were a complete calendar of births, marriages, and deaths. Both dwelt with sentiment on the early love affairs of elderly neighbors, who to my eye were most unpromising subjects for romance. I gathered that the history of those who had not married and who had not lived happy ever

after was on the whole more interesting than that of the sober couples I knew, who seemed so prosaically used to each other.

“And there was Sophia Dunn, — Sophie she used to be called. Well, she escaped a good deal by not marrying Hamilton Dent. Look at him now.”

Miss Sophia Dunn, three pews in front of us on Sunday, became my study: a woman who had “escaped,” — it clutched my heart.

“Some people have wondered why Eliphalet Locker never married. I always thought I knew why,” said my grandmother.

I turned a hem, and prepared to listen.

“His going to Europe with that family of rich cousins made the trouble. They took him to keep their youngest boy out of mischief, and what does he do himself but fall in love with the eldest sister.”

“And she with him, too, I have always heard. That was the worst of it. It makes my heart ache to think that she married abroad, and has never from that day come home again.”

“And on the ship, coming back alone, they say” —

"Nobody ever speaks of it," said my mother. "It was all thirty years ago or more."

"He was a young man of such promise. He wrote poetry, and he might have been a regular author," my grandmother continued. "I remember before he went abroad, he was always over in Concord, and the literary people there took such an interest in him! He never seemed to go, after he came back from Europe. He and his sister have lived on that farm for years. She is as good a woman as ever breathed, but she can't be much company to him, or he to her."

"Poor young Locker!—old Locker now!"

"He could n't have been a very strong character," my grandmother argued, "to be so beaten. He ought to have written all the better."

But my mother sighed, and so did I.

I had seen Mr. Eliphalet Locker many a time. It was usually at the post-office that I met him: he seemed to care more for letters and papers than anybody else I knew. The day after the conversation about him, I was

buying stamps when I heard his voice behind me. The Mr. Locker of last Saturday was not the Mr. Locker of this Wednesday. He had appeared to me then a tall, lean, grayish-brown figure, — his complexion, his clothes, his horse, his old wagon, all of a color. He even said good-morning and asked after my family in exactly the same gray-and-brown tone.

I saw a different person now, and I was rather shy of him in his altered character. I hardly liked to speak to him, I felt such a painful interest in his story. He inquired as usual for my grandmother, but this was not until he had possessed himself of a large package of papers and magazines, and had looked them eagerly through. A broad, powerful brow, and eyes too bright and keen for what they had to look at, — these were what I saw now rather than the sunburnt clothes.

I went home with wild dreams of what might be done to make Mr. Eliphalet Locker happy. I rashly introduced the subject at the supper-table. It was rudely handled.

"You can't teach an old dog new tricks," said my father.

"Poor old Locker," laughed Tom, "he writes poetry yet and prints it in the 'Concord Minute Man.' The Still Waters paper ain't good enough for him."

"Writing poetry is better than sitting idle, I suppose," grandma remarked.

"His poetry is a comfort to him, no doubt," my mother added.

Seldom did my entire family miss the point so completely. I rushed off to Florence Fay, and told her the whole romantic tale. We searched a heap of Concord papers, till we found a poem signed E. L. Florence read it three times, and said dreamily, "That sounds like Shelley."

"And now, what is to be done about it?"

"What is to be done about a poem?" laughed Florence, still dreamily. "Why, read it, and keep it, and read it again."

"I have an idea!" I said. "Mr. Eliphalet Locker does n't get praised enough. You can see it by just looking at him. I should n't wonder if he was a genius."

Florence was fired with the thought.

“You say I am practical. Somebody else has to be practical *för* a genius, Florence. Well! You know Gilbert Thorne’s cousin that lives in Boston? You know he is a reporter, and a critic, and a reviewer on a Boston paper. Now you see! I will cut all the poems marked E. L. out of these papers, and if you say they are good, Florence Fay, I am going to give them to Gilbert to send to his cousin, and he will tell him he must write just the nicest kind of an article about them for that great Boston paper. Not a soul in Still Waters but Gilbert Thorne must know.”

Scissors in hand we attacked a huge pile of papers, and by the time we had reached the bottom of the heap, we had culled six poems and a prose essay.

“Why has nobody praised these before?” I asked indignantly.

“They think poetry is put in just to fill up a corner. Besides, he has written so little!”

“Because nobody has praised him,” I persisted.

“Read that, Phœbe, — that is the best poem : ‘ Scriptor Ignotus.’ ”

“I like his prose,” said I. “It is poetical, but it is sensible, too. Florence, he must be over *fifty* years old.”

“Lots of people write even when they are fifty. Mr. Locker has always seemed to me queer and young, in spite of his gray hair. I believe he will be famous yet, and he will give up that farm, all rocks and stones, and go to Concord to live, perhaps. It will be all your doing, Phœbe Gay, and then how do you expect to feel ? ”

Gilbert Thorne was not like Tom, who would have laughed at us. Gilbert Thorne had been detected in poetry himself ; in fact, on my last birthday, there had been tucked into a basket of arbutus hung at my door a song, — supposed to be a song to waken me as I entered my sixteenth year. If it was not Gilbert Thorne who wrote it, pray who could it have been ? At all events, Gilbert proved now a capital conspirator, went to Boston with our poems, and, as he told us, gave it to his cousin strong.

“Our article,” we called it when it appeared in the Saturday evening edition of the Boston paper. “He has picked out just the right things to quote,” cried Florence; “and what lovely things he has said about them, things I never thought to say! He has even given a little biographical sketch, with the real truth left out. I believe when Mr. Locker reads that, he will have his first bit of happiness since those sad times so long ago.”

“I should think,” said I, “if Ernest Thorne, just by writing a piece in a paper, could make people as happy as that, he would be *perfectly* happy himself.”

Ernest Thorne came up from Boston not long after, and we held a conference.

“It’s great sport,” said this young journalist. “I have put three or four other fellows on his track. You will see personals and extracts from his poems. What is more to the point, my chief has asked him to write a weekly anything-he-pleases for our Literary Supplement.”

“Florence!” I cried.

I had seen Mr. Locker in the post-office

that day, but I was shy of him than ever, and could with difficulty tell him how my grandmother was.

“Did he look happy? Did he look *changed*?” inquired Florence eagerly.

“He had on the same clothes, and yet he looked younger all over. I’m sure he made his old horse go faster.”

“I suppose he goes to the post-office more than ever,” Florence reflected, “now that he has got such happiness out of that little square box with a number on it.”

“He will do more now,” said Ernest Thorne. “This will warm him up. He is too old by this time to have his head turned like the young fellows.” Ernest then instructed Florence and me as to a number of writers who had achieved fame late in life. We listened politely, though we had learned all about them in “English Literature.”

We heard by and by that Mr. Eliphalet Locker was going to leave Still Waters; he was to live henceforth in Boston.

“I saw him to-day,” my father reported. “Things have taken a turn with Locker. He

looks waked up. He's got a new hat, for one thing. He tells me he has steady employment on a magazine and a newspaper in Boston. He has had to wait a good while, but it looks as if he were going to get there at last."

"It does me good to hear it," my grandmother joined in. "I always said the man had a fine face, — a face you dwell on."

Until he went to Boston to live, I saw Mr. Locker nearly every day ; but because I was young and over-conscious of what I had done, I could never get acquainted with him.

"It is better not to," Florence thought. "We might be disenchanted. I have heard it is seldom safe to know an author."

I objected, and cited my famous visit to Miss Alcott.

As for our poet's interest in me, I think he knew me as a little granddaughter of Mrs. Alexander Wise, who did errands on the way home from school. To be sure, when the family read his essay on "Youth," in the Boston magazine, they embarrassed me by saying that there seemed a suggestion of their

Phœbe about it. Had Mr. Eliphalet Locker seen young Phœbe Gay?

I did not meet Mr. Locker again until six years had passed. It was at an evening reception in Boston. Somebody said, "*Mr. Locker* is here. He is so hard to get, — so shy, you know. We shall have to wait a little. Mamma, you will introduce Miss Callender and Mr. Locker? She says he came from Still Waters."

How Mr. Eliphalet Locker and I at last made friends does not, however, belong to the story of my sixteenth year.

VII

LITTLE MASTER

NEVER shall I forget the day I went to school an aunt. I was only eleven years old, which made me a very precocious aunt, and quite a wonder to my schoolmates.

"It's a nephew," I said as modestly as I could, "and he is named for my grandfather, Alexander Wise." I walked to my seat, feeling very interesting and important.

For a time all my other characters were sunk in the character of aunt. I was a very poor sort of sister and amounted to nothing as a granddaughter for several months. It was a strong attraction that could draw me away from my grandmother's society ; but now, school over, I flew to my nephew's cradle, and there spent my leisure. "His Aunt," was now my sister Lilian's name for me, and I was proud to lose the rest of my identity.

All this was four years ago, and by the time I write of now, aunt Phœbe had gone into long dresses, and on nearly the same date, Master Alec had laid aside skirts for trousers. These historic events were duly marked in the family. "Little Miss Phœbe Gay" dropped her old title, and my nephew ceased to be called Baby and was now greeted by my grandfather, "Hello, Little Master! How are you, my hero?" Moreover, Alec had now a baby sister, which advanced him several numbers.

When grown-up people asked him their usual question, "How many brothers and sisters have you, my little man?" he answered, "One sister, one grandmother, and the rest are aunts." Uncle Tom declared this showed undue female influence, and he'd like to know where he came in.

"And grandpa ought to count, I'm sure," I said, for Little Master trotted all day long at his grandfather's heels.

"Where's my little philosopher?" inquires the old gentleman, looking around over his spectacles. "I had some matters to

discuss with him. Ha, my learned Theban, here you are !”

Little Master deserved these high titles, if asking questions that all the philosophers together could not have answered would give him a place among them. The young Alexander was no mean thinker. The general effect of a conversation with him was somewhat like this: “*Is there a flag on the North Pole? What is Santa Claus’ true address? Is there anything more dangerous than a battle? What do policemen eat for dinner?*”

“He says sublime things sometimes,” his mamma insisted. “‘I came from heaven, did n’t I? I was just *born* in Still Waters, that’s all.’ If ever a child ‘trailed clouds of glory’ — I will say so, if I am his mother. It makes me feel as if I had simply got to be an angel, now I have these children. He asked the other day, in that investigating voice of his, ‘What is it makes grown-up people all good?’ Any society seems worldly after children’s, — even grand-ma’s and Phœbe’s.”

Little Master, however, was not all poet and seer : he was frequently boy unmixed.

“ I had just read over ‘ Intimations of Immortality,’ ” Lilian told us, “ and concluded it was meant for Alec, when I discovered streaks of strawberry jam on that young man’s front.

“ ‘ What ’s that, sir ? ’ I say.

“ ‘ I dess it ’s jam ! ’

“ ‘ Then you know what I must do. I must punish you.’

“ ‘ I did know. I punished myself ! ’ cried Alec triumphantly.

“ ‘ Sure an’ he did, mum,’ says Margaret, ‘ I seen him sittin’ on a little stool in the corner of the dark entry, all alone by himself, much as half an hour. He ’d eat much as half a jam pot, and widout a bit of a spoon, ayther.’

“ What was I to do ? ” said Lilian. “ The child looked perfectly complacent, as if the jam were worth all it cost, — a very good bargain, in fact. I can’t have him growing up with such principles as these. He has been uncommonly naughty lately.”

This was true, and stern discipline had

been necessary, — so stern that Little Master had threatened his parents, “I’ll get sick, and sicker and sicker, and die, and go to heaven, and then no more Alec, and *you’ll* be sorry then! You’ll *cry!*”

There followed a long conversation with his mother, and Little Master was charming the rest of the day. He informed my grandmother that he was n’t going to be a boy any more.

“What’s that you say?”

“Not goin’ to be a boy,” said Alec firmly. “I’m goin’ to be a butterfly! I tried to be good, and I could n’t.”

My grandmother was so taken by surprise, it was some time before she could deal with this moral problem.

“A butterfly? Well, well! A butterfly? Dear, dear! Suppose you pick up my ball of yarn, Little Master. How would you like to do something useful, and sort buttons for grandma?” This was on my grandmother’s grand principle of *do* instead of *don’t*.

“How people manage to bring up children without a grandmother’s house near by, I can-

not see," sighed Lilian wearily. "There's no rest for me till these two are grown up."

Then Little Master planted himself squarely before his mother, and put to her this inquiry, "*Which* would you rather have, mamma, — rest or children?"

"That settled it, — the whole question," said Lilian. "Alec has a way of putting things in a nutshell."

"He's a child you can hold a rational conversation with," my grandfather declared. "I ask him what he thinks of things, and I always get an answer."

So it appeared, out among the grapevines, when grandpa clipped with his great shears, and Little Master's business was to follow and pick up the cuttings. Their voices never stopped, but went up and down together, sometimes very earnest, then breaking out into a laugh, with the gayest chirping of young Alec.

"Sounds like a little bird," murmured grandma, at her upper window. "I don't believe there's a bobolink much happier."

"He's always good when he is with

grandpa," said Lilian, "and pretty good when he's with Phœbe; but not with his father's sisters, or aunts generally. Aunts are bad for boys, and good for girls. They want all the fun of nephews, without the trouble. They are perfectly irresponsible. I don't say Phœbe. Phœbe is teaching Alec his letters, and I am grateful for that."

Alec was of the height which just looks across grown people's laps. He would stand beside me with one trusting little hand upon my knee, and would hunt for his friends' initials in the big book I held before him; for that was the way I was teaching him to read. There was rare sport when he walked abroad, and discovered "letters" of those we loved on every sign and poster. The village came to seem all alphabets, and my family all initials.

"What a pleasure to see the little mind unfold!" purred my grandmother; and I had indeed discovered a great new delight. How far, far superior to those old experiences with dolls!

The story of Little Master was not all

merry as the bobolinks. One day grandpa and he rode away to the next town. It grew time for them to be back, and they did not come; the darkness fell, and still they did not come.

"Father is a safe driver. Nothing could possibly happen," said my mother anxiously.

It was two hours later when my grandfather drove slowly into the yard, and lifted out of the chaise a limp little form. Alec's face was not so wan as my grandfather's. There was a piteous look in his old blue eyes.

"I took him to the doctor, first," poor grandpa faltered. "I was n't looking, and the child's so fond of horses. You must blame me. I ain't to be trusted," he said in a broken voice.

"Mamma's darling, mamma's precious, mamma's sweetheart," Lilian crooned over her little boy, and smiled at him her steadiest smile, — poor, stricken Lilian. Alec smiled back, and that brought her first tears.

"Roger and his father must both come." She spoke calmly again. "Tell them the kick of a horse."

Roger came up to the spare room, where Little Master was laid on the bed. He kissed Lilian, and held her to him as they looked at Alec, and it comforted us all to see how their love was helping them to bear it. We were comforted again when a little voice came from the bed.

"Papa, that horse had one white foot, and the rest not white."

"Is that so, my son?" and there was a blessed laugh.

Grandma patted grandpa's trembling hand. "You come right down and have some supper, father. You're faint for food."

"I can't eat, mother."

"We will leave him with the two doctors, Roger and his father, and we'll trust in the Lord."

We could not tell grandpa the conclusion of the doctors.

"If he lives, he will probably be lame, — lame, mother!" and Lilian hid her face on her mother's breast.

It seemed for a time that there was to be another "Story of a Short Life." Indeed, I

found Lilian one day crying over Mrs. Ewing's beautiful story.

"My darling, too, is such a little soldier, such a little hero."

Alec had been a child all hop, skip, and jump. He lay now with his leg in plaster, but he called out, "Aunt Phœbe, aunt Phœbe, I tell you all the things I can do," — a list of the games to be played on a counterpane, "games without legs." "And grandpa knows how, too;" for grandpa came every day, with a face that always asked to be forgiven.

"Well, my hero, how goes it?"

"He has had pain, but he is a brave boy."

"Boys don't cry. I *used* to cry when I bumped my head. Now I just say 'Oh!'"

"C-r-u-t-c-h-e-s," spelled Lilian, "very soon."

Grandpa had brought a paint-box, and they painted pictures in old magazines, horses and ships preferred. The most successful were cut out and presented to the family, — the winner of the Derby, painted green, being sent to my grandmother.

There were brave, patient, unselfish days, and there were sick, sad, discouraging days. "At last," said Lilian, "I believe he is really better. He kicked his mother with his well foot." I had not seen Lilian look so happy for three months. "Father Waite says he can have his crutches this week."

Crutches for our darling! He himself was delighted with his new toys. The neighbors' children gathered in the dooryard, as Alec hopped about on the grass. He sat on the doorstep and lent his crutches to envious boys of the right size.

"How little do children realize!" my grandmother sighed, as she dried her eyes.

"You would think such a child would, such a little philosopher, as father calls him." I wondered sometimes if those deep, thoughtful eyes did not "realize."

Alec, meanwhile, was fast learning to read. "The great alleviation," I heard reading called, — not a bad name, in any case, and the truest possible in Little Master's. The pleasures of the intellectual life were, indeed, beginning for little Alec; for instance, his

delight when he found that he could read without pronouncing aloud the words: "I have learned to read in my heart!" he announced. He discovered that he *thought*: "I have learned to talk in my heart, too!"

"I had a *beautiful* dream," remarked this young metaphysician, "and then I waked up, and undreamed my dream."

"Like many older people," said my father.

I think without a doubt that in those trying months of his fifth year the Alexander Waite you may have heard of began his scholar's career.

There came a day that made my grandfather nearly as happy as another day had made him miserable. He and Alec had been having a grand frolic, crutches and all. Grandpa had dressed up Alec in his high dickey and black satin stock, which I, at Alec's age, had supposed distinguished a grandfather from a father, who wore collar and necktie. Grandpa's gold-bowed spectacles were added, and Alec fairly danced about on his crutches. The family came to see, and the little villagers peered through the fence.

Grandma came out, holding up her hands, and to the amazement of everybody, Alec shouted, "Grammer, I'm gramper," dropped his crutches, and ran limping across the yard to meet her.

"A miracle!" cried my grandmother.

"A good omen," said his father. "He will be running about in six weeks."

It is true that, to the sorrow of his uncle Tom, Little Master never could play football; but in other pursuits, the slight limp was no hindrance, and served to guide him to the way of life in which, I am sure, he has found most happiness.

VIII

THE GOLDEN WEDDING

“GRANDPA and I will put on our best, and you can give us your grandfather’s favorite pudding for dinner; but don’t let me hear a word about presents.”

So spoke my grandmother. There was silence throughout the family, though Tom gave a huge wink on the side of his face towards me. Not since we had prepared a Christmas tree for our elders, five years before, had Tom and I had such a secret to contain; for while my dear innocent grandmother sat there threading a needle, a colossal surprise party was plotting behind her back.

“Though I shall tell her the day before,” my mother exclaimed; and it is my private belief she would not have dared do anything else. “Dear mother would never have consented to have so much trouble taken in her

honor, and I could not let her have the care and the worry. No, no, we will go quietly on with our preparations.”

“We must not leave out a cousin,” said Lilian ; “if we do the thing at all, we must do it thoroughly.”

This meant a considerable undertaking ; for if the Callenders had been a royal family, they could hardly have had more cousins. There were cousins rich and cousins poor, cousins learned and cousins unlearned, city cousins, country cousins, cousins that had risen, and cousins that had gone down. There were a few, a very few, of his wife’s relatives with whom my father used the Vicar of Wakefield’s methods.

Now, however, not even the shiftless Wilkinses were to be omitted. The invitations and replies were smuggled out of the house and into the house through my father’s office. My mother, for the first time in her innocent life, was engaged in a clandestine correspondence ; and I felt some surprise at seeing how much she, at her years, enjoyed doing a thing without her mother’s permission. The letters

of regret or acceptance were carefully preserved for grandpa and grandma to read "after it was over." These letters contained such prodigious compliments that my grandmother told us she was ashamed of them; yet, to the best of my knowledge, dear grandma kept them in an inlaid box the rest of her life, and read them with tears, — it was all so true, she said, of grandpa!

Preparations for the great day went on with some difficulty, for my grandmother was what is called "an active old lady," not at all of that variety that sits in a large armchair and looks out of the window. We were obliged to call it getting the house ready for uncle Oliver and his bride, who, truthfully enough, were to make their first appearance together on this occasion. Grandma approved, and remarked that company was a great incentive. T. and P. Callender, Decorators, were kept busy; for Lilian warned us, "Relations see everything, and you can't keep all the blinds shut on a gala day." We papered the little back entry, painted the piazza floor, and Tom went about with his can of crude oil till things shone again.

“I am thankful to see that Tom is going to grow up a handy man in his own house, and take a pride,” said my grandmother. There had been a time when Tom had seemed something less than useful, — the period at which he had whittled the balusters and painted the front doorstep in a fancy pattern.

It was more difficult to prepare the feast, but there again the bride was a convenience ; also Lilian’s baby, which had the whooping-cough, and required a great deal of my grandmother’s attention.

Grandpa was comparatively easy to dispose of. My father would suggest at breakfast in a guilty, hesitating voice, “Perhaps you would like to look over those papers at the office this morning.”

This was of all ways the one to lure an old gentleman who had retired from business ten years before, and whose soul had yearned ever since for ledgers and day-books.

“Not since he gave up the Company have I seen him so contented as when he starts off of a morning with your father to his office. But he must n’t go every day, — he has n’t the strength lately,” and dear grandma sighed.

On the day before the golden wedding, my mother broke it to the chief actors. Grandpa rubbed his hands and smiled from the beginning, but it was not till mamma had shed a few tears that my grandmother was mollified.

“Try to think of it, mother, from the point of view of your children and grandchildren, — a sacrifice you make for us.”

“That ’ll fetch her,” said Tom to me, the door being open into the next room, where I trust we may be excused for having listened with high delight to the trying conversation.

“I hope it is understood there are to be no presents,” continued the injured party. “I have more things than I know what to do with. Give me your love and your duty; I want no more.” Grandma fairly bristled with such sentiments as these each year as Christmas or birthdays approached.

Nevertheless, when at breakfast next morning, my father presented to grandpa a gold-headed cane, the gift of his children, and to grandma the most beautiful pearl pin to be found in Boston, she received it very meekly, and almost gratefully.

The cousins, "dona ferentes," according to Tom and his Virgil, arrived through the morning. As for the gold thimbles, and the golden-bowled spoons, and the gold-lined pitchers and sugar-bowls, "They will be good to hand down," whispered my grandmother, and I think what finally reconciled her to her wedding gifts was the reflection that she could leave them in her will. I had long ago learned to present my grandmother with something that would not keep. This time Tom and I laid before our grandparents a magnificent bunch of Black Hamburg grapes.

"Let's see 'em leave those in their wills," said Tom.

How we had worked that morning! Lilian gave the commands. "Cut green branches, Tom, and set them in jugs and jars all about the piazza and hall, and big bunches of golden-rod for the parlor mantel and bay window, and flowers all over the house, as golden as you can get them."

The two long tables laid in the back garden were decked with ferns and goldenrod. This old garden was a law unto itself. No one had

the heart to cut down the larger trees, though their roots did take strength from the vegetables. Roadside flowers had crept into it, — a great clump of Bouncing Bet flourished in the grass. In the corner of the wall grew a patch of mint, and a bush with fat caraway seeds had been a resort of mine for many years. There were white Scotch roses left over from long ago, and old shrubs of calycanthus, whose hard little brown blossoms smelled like fresh strawberries.

Meanwhile, in the house, the guests were gathering, and grandma, in her deep, cordial voice, was welcoming them as warmly as if she had planned the whole affair. She tossed back her cap-strings, and held out both hands: "Anne Dudley, as I'm alive, all the way from New York."

"Dear aunt Wise, and uncle, too. Who would ever dream it was your golden wedding? Those were days when they married young."

"Seventy-five years my last birthday," said my grandmother composedly.

"She don't look it, she don't look it." Grandpa shook his head, smiling.

Then comes up a hearty nephew. "Well, aunt, do you remember" — some naughty prank he did not seem at all sorry for.

"Yes, yes ; yes, yes. And you got what you deserved."

My grandfather hovered near the bride, as we called her, and accepted compliments for her from everybody, whether the nieces and nephews praised the color in her cheeks or her ability as a Sunday-school teacher. This was a little like other weddings, for it left the bridegroom in a rather obscure position. It made me say to the nearest cousin, "Did you ever see the picture of my grandfather taken fifty years ago? I should have fallen in love with him for one."

"Why, this is little Phœbe Gay grown to be a tall young lady," was the answer. "And how do you like being grown up?"

"This is my youngest granddaughter," said grandma, drawing me to her side, and to my embarrassment they fell back and looked me over.

"Upon my word, ma'am, she looks as you did fifty years ago."

It was a beautiful old gentleman, with white hair and gold-bowed spectacles, who had spoken. He was much looked up to that day; for he was the only person in the company who had been present at the wedding long ago.

“Well do I remember,” said the old gentleman. “A fair young creature the bride was, all in white but for the roses in her cheeks. A sweeter face to look upon you need never desire to see.”

“Nor a truer heart to dwell with.” Grandfather’s voice was husky as the two spoke her praises in the language of their youth.

“And now,” my mother suggested, “shall we step into the garden?”

Lilian had planned a wedding procession, through the hall, out at the rear door, into the garden: first, six ushers, — Tom and boy cousins; second, six bridesmaids, — Phœbe and cousins, in white muslin and yellow ribbons; next my grandmother, leaning upon the minister’s arm, and my grandfather with the minister’s wife; then, nieces, nephews, and cousins, tapering down to frolicsome little grandchildren, capering in the rear. The

wedding march sounded, and Tom stepped off with his ushers, and we girls followed, with thoughts, — ah, thoughts !

Mr. Rumsey, the minister, asked a long and comprehensive blessing, which included the viands on the table, and the remotest relatives around it. Conversation grew brisk. It was family talk : how poor Stephen's affairs were ; how Adelaide was running to Europe a fifth time ; how John's son was turning out literary ; and Mary's daughter had married a missionary.

"Just hear 'em," whispered Tom ; "and you say it's boys that make a noise. That cake with the stuff between is tiptop. Have a piece ?"

By and by there was a rap on the table, and another and another, before silence was secured. Then the minister rose and gave the toast, "An honest man's the noblest work of God," by which he meant my grandfather, to be sure. Uncle Robert responded, and said fine things about the honorable business man, bringing it all around to apply to his upright old father. The sunlight through the apple

boughs fell on my grandfather's white head and on his face, wistful, deprecating under the praise, but of a wonderful sweetness and happiness.

"Grandpa looks pale," said Lilian, "and he has n't eaten a thing. Grandpa — have you noticed it? — has n't been the same since Alec's accident."

My father responded to the toast of The Mother-in-law, and with great success, for there was first an anecdote, then a compliment, another anecdote, next a funny compliment, then a tender compliment, and an anecdote to end with, — the whole a complete refutation of the newspaper theory of the mother-in-law. Now, as we every one of us knew that there was just a dash of the "benevolent despot" in my grandmother's character, this speech was much to our amusement and satisfaction, while dear grandma smiled delightedly to think she was the grand exception.

"The best of sons-in-law, the best of sons-in-law," she murmured, as my father sat down.

The last speech was the youngest, for it

was Tom's. When Tom spoke pieces at school, I looked at the wall; now I fixed my eyes on a cloud. Tom's school declamations at this period were selections from Burke, Webster, or Choate, and it was upon these models that his speech upon "Grandmothers" was composed. How Daniel Webster at the age of seventeen would have saluted his grandmother, one cannot be sure, but no doubt it would have been somewhat after the fashion in which Tom began.

I, for my part, was scared into rapt attention. Tom was tracing ably the influence of grandmothers on the future of the nation, when a dreadful thing happened: the prettiest of all Tom's cousins tittered. Tom floundered, hot and red, began his sentence again, then stopped short. Uncle Robert, to help matters out, started applause, but I was lost in hatred of Nettie Chubb and in despair for Tom. He had rehearsed his speech to me in the barn, and I knew what fine things there were to come. It was too true, Tom had broken down completely, and I expected to see him take his seat. He stood there a moment

steady himself, then he threw back his head and laughed. The rest of his speech was Tom Callender's own, without a suspicion of Webster. He talked right to grandma, and was so saucy that my mother was saying, "Tom, *Tom*," under her breath.

"You must have been an awfully pretty girl, grandma," Tom went on.

"Hear, hear," said grandpa in a shaking voice.

"And I'd rather have your piano-playing, grandma, than all the concerts you have to pay for. And I'd rather hear you tell a story than read it out of any book, — even Dickens. And I'd rather have you give me good advice than hear any minister preach a sermon, — even Mr. Rumsey here. I tell you, the nation would be all right if there were a lot more grandmothers like you, — and a lot more men like grandpa," he added, and sat down amid loud applause.

I avoided the cousin that had tittered, and I thought it evidence of a great soul in my brother Tom that he was as friendly with her as ever.

The banquet concluded with the singing of a hymn, composed by a niece from Maine. I had overheard some talk about this production.

“Sung to a good lively tune out under the trees, I don’t doubt it will sound pretty,” said my grandmother. “You don’t have to hear much of the words, if they all sing up loud. Anything is better, too, than to hurt her feelings.”

“We must have some of mother’s music,” said the sons and daughters, as they went back to the house.

One after another called for a tune. They even made her sing. When my grandmother lost her youthful voice, she contrived a substitute for singing. She played the accompaniment with distinctness and emphasis, and spoke the words as she went along, with dramatic expression and an admirably musical effect of her deep, rich voice.

“‘Gayly the troubadour,’ aunt; come, give us that.”

Uncle Robert spoke up. “‘So bide you yet, and so bide you yet,’—here’s my wife who has never heard that.”

“I don’t know what you will think of me, especially on such an occasion as this. I am really ashamed to sing it.”

“Sing it, mother,” said my grandfather.

“There’s not a word of truth in it,” insisted my grandmother, and thereupon sang with great spirit, —

“‘Alas, my friends, you little know
The ills that do from wedlock flow.
Farewell to every hour of ease
When once you have a wife to please.
So bide you yet, so bide you yet,
You little know what’s to betide you yet.

“‘A marriage noose will make you fret,
And a wayward wife will tame you yet,
Will tame you yet, will tame you yet,
And a wayward wife will tame you yet.’”

“And a wayward wife will tame you yet,” — her sons took up the refrain, and sang it to their indignant wives.

Who should walk in at that moment but uncle Oliver, and the most beautiful young lady! The prettiest scene of all was when the old bride welcomed the young bride.

Presently young Mrs. Oliver Wise was singing for us. She sang “The Land o’ the

Leal," and before she had finished, we had taken her into the family and loved her, one and all. Grandma watched aunt Alice's pure, rapt face, and put her hand in grandpa's, as the sweet, thrilling voice sang, —

“‘There’s nae sorrow there, John,
There’s neither could nor care, John,
The day is aye fair
In the land o’ the leal.’”

I looked at uncle Oliver as he watched his lovely young wife; and I discovered Tom watching them both. I hardly knew his expression, it was so tender and respectful and wondering. When he caught me, he cocked his eye at me; yet I believe Tom was thinking just what I was thinking.

Soon the good-bys began. “This has been a great occasion, aunt, — a day to look back upon.”

“We have been greatly blessed,” said my grandmother. “Kind friends, good children, and good grandchildren.” This was for me, who stood beside her. “There won’t be many more years” —

“Hush, dear mother.”

A few weeks later we laid our dear grandfather to rest, and aunt Alice sang again, —

“‘There’s nae sorrow there, John,
There’s neither could nor care, John,
The day is aye fair
In the land o’ the leal.’”

IX

A FAIRY GODFATHER

THE Callenders knew a secret which came as near being romantic as anything that I remember in that year.

My father came in one day to dinner with face a little anxious. "I don't know," he said to my mother, "as this is just the day you would choose for me to bring an old friend home to dinner. He's looking over the beehives in the yard. I'd like to ask him in."

"Ask him in this moment," answered my mother, without flinching. "We are having an old-fashioned boiled dinner, to please mother. I wish, indeed, it were a more genteel dinner, but don't leave the poor man in the yard another moment."

There was nothing but grace and goodwill in my mother's welcome of Mr. Christopher

Sadler, of Iowa. Mr. Sadler was a stranger easily welcomed. I think he was the least stiff person I had ever seen enter our house, what with calling my grave father "Jim," wringing my mother's hand, and *almost* kissing me; and then falling upon the corned beef and cabbage as if he had met another friend of his youth.

"I have n't seen the old town for thirty years."

"Many changes, do you find?"

"Nothing like the West. Things go slower here in New England. Now I have seen pretty nearly the whole history of the State of Iowa."

Mr. Sadler thereupon gave us the whole history of the State of Iowa, and my mother looked serene and interested, happy to have his attention drawn from the plain dinner.

"I don't care if I take another helping," Mr. Sadler interrupted himself; "I have n't tasted any so good since I was a boy."

"So you've stuck by the old town, Jim? Been making money?" he asked briskly.

"No, Chris," said my father, smiling.

"You've got what's better." Mr. Sadler

looked around the table. "How many did you tell me? And I, not one."

My mother's tender eyes were turned upon the old man.

"Three dead. What's money? What's money when you've lost 'em all?"

Tom and I looked very sober. My mother asked softly, "Your wife is living, sir?"

"Yes, yes, alive and hearty, thank God," and Mr. Sadler was cheerful again.

He laid down knife and fork, and leaned forward. "The truth is, I came here for a purpose. I wanted to look the old place over, and I wanted to hunt up about the only living relation I've got. A man named Thorne married my cousin Mary, — the sweetest Mary of them all."

"She was my dear friend," said my mother.

"She left a boy," Mr. Sadler continued. "How is his father, well off?"

"Well, he is the Still Waters lawyer, and you know we are a peaceable community."

"Has plenty of time to read the morning paper, eh? Well, what I want to find out is, whether this is the right sort of boy."

“Better ask Tom,” said my father.

“Better ask Phœbe,” said Tom.

But neither Tom nor I could be got to express any opinion of Gilbert Thorne.

“Seventeen, you say. Time to tell whether he’s got principle.”

I, for my part, was indignant that anybody should ask whether Gilbert Thorne had “principle,” but I said not a word.

“I say in my business, ‘Give me a man that hath principle—I know where to have him.’ Oliver Cromwell said that. He had the right idea.”

“Has his father the money to educate the boy?” Mr. Sadler continued.

Somehow this conversation was as disagreeable to me as it was interesting.

“He is going to send him to Harvard College.”

“He may just as well go through college a poor boy.” Mr. Sadler meditated. “You held on, Jim, and went to college, but I broke away, and set to making money. I’m old enough now to tell the truth and let folks have the use of the facts. I’m willing to say

now that it gives a man a different start in life, and a different kind of a place in the world, if he has an education. Send your boys to college, Jim."

"Tom will be the fifth to go. Would you send Phœbe, too?"

He turned short round and looked me over, smiling. "They're beginning to go, out our way," he said, a little proudly. "I rather guess I'd let this young lady do about whatever she wanted to." Thus did Mr. Sadler shirk the great question asked him.

"What kind of tastes has this young man? What does he like?"

"He likes Phœbe!" I could have pinched Tom for that.

"Eh, eh! Has he got any sort of bent? What is he likely to make of himself?"

I knew, for Gilbert Thorne had told me once. I said nothing.

"I wish I could get at the lad. I'm rather shy of young folks," Mr. Sadler declared, though I should not have thought it. "Does the boy have any look of her?" he asked thoughtfully.

"I can see that he has," my mother answered, "though no one else thinks so. When he smiles, there is a little flash as if I saw Mary. She died when he was a little child. There is something fine in Gilbert's face, — it is as if he remembered his mother."

"Bert Thorne is the jolliest chap I know," Tom broke in. "Bert Thorne is n't a" — Tom could not find the word, but expressed it in his face.

"Is he going to make a good citizen? I'd like to have your opinion."

"Patriotic and all that? Bert Thorne'll be governor of Massachusetts, sir."

"Healthy?"

"Healthy as I am," and Tom threw out his chest, and showed off his breathing.

"Brains?"

I thought our visitor was making quite free enough with Gilbert Thorne, yet I listened keenly to what was said, and especially by my father.

"I am not so sure he will be governor, but I think he may amount to something." Such is the moderation of our elders.

“ Well,” said our visitor, as we rose from the table, “ I am much obliged to you, ma’am, for your hospitality. You will let me call in again before I leave town ? ”

“ Your young cousin is very polite to old ladies, — that I can answer for,” my grandmother spoke up, at parting.

Tom gave me a very complex wink, in the background of the group at the door.

A rich native of Still Waters returned to his old town ! It probably meant a public library, or a home for the aged, or at least a drinking fountain.

Mr. Sadler spent a week at the Thornes’ : he went fishing with Gilbert ; invited Gilbert and Tom to spend a day in Boston, — did not invite me, alas, no ; drove to Cambridge with the boys, and let them show him Harvard College ; climbed our highest hills because the boys were proud of the view ; and finally went away leaving “ golden opinions ” behind him.

“ He’s a fine old boy,” was Tom’s verdict. “ He’s taken a great shine to Bert. I tell you what, Phœbe ! ”

"You need n't," said I. "I can see for myself."

It was not for nothing that Florence Fay and I were such experienced readers of story-books.

"Stories, stories everywhere," my grandmother would murmur, "if a body had the gift."

The story of Mr. Sadler's visit was plain enough to me by the time my father said significantly to my mother, "Old Christopher came in to see me again to-day. He has come back for a day or two."

"Is this for the children to hear, too?"

"He says it's not to be known outside this family. Do you understand that, children?"

Tom and I looked solemn pledges of secrecy, and knew perfectly what was coming.

"The old fellow came to see how he could spend some money in Still Waters. He calls himself a Westerner, and he brags about Iowa, but it's New England that's got him by the heart. He wanted to do something for the town, — wanted to endow something. I suggested one thing and another, but they

did n't strike him exactly. 'This town must be kept up ; it must go ahead,' he kept saying. I suggested a library. 'What becomes of your young men?' he asked. 'They go away,' I told him. 'They can't afford to stay here.' 'Tell you what I've been thinking,' says Christopher then, 'I've been thinking I'd endow a *man*! I feel pretty well suited with that young Thorne. He's my nearest relation. Keep an eye on him, Jim, till he's twenty-one, and let me know how he's turning out.'"

I must have tossed my head at that, for my mother said, "Why, does n't this news please you, Phœbe?"

"As if Gilbert Thorne had to have people's eyes kept on him!"

"He is to know nothing about this till he is twenty-one," my father continued. "Then Mr. Sadler will do by him as he would by a son of his own, and when he dies, Gilbert will have the bulk of his property. He's fixed it already."

"I am glad for Mary's sake," and my mother's voice trembled.

We were allowed to communicate the news to my sister Lilian. There was no better fun than telling secrets to Lilian. She opened her eyes round and big, till the secret looked ten times as large. We had taken Gilbert's prospects very calmly, but Lilian looked innumerable things, and glanced around the circle with inquiring, excited, laughing eyes. This was a little strange, because I had a very short time ago heard Lilian say, "I am glad that Thorne boy is going off to college. I am tired of seeing him about."

"I would n't get too much stirred up about it," my father cautioned us. "The old gentleman may change his mind, or he may lose his money. If I had been in his place, I would n't have told anybody."

"He had to," I cried. "He could n't just come and go, and not speak a word. Besides, he liked you, papa."

"He liked the whole lot of us," said Tom. "It's an awful shame we ain't his cousins."

"There's something nice about Gilbert Thorne," Lilian reflected, "though he does sit about, without a word to say for himself."

He seems so interested that it makes him interesting. I have no doubt he has his ideas. I suppose Tom and he will be chums in college."

"You don't know Bert Thorne, not one of you," said Tom, a little sulkily.

I was surely as glad as anybody, yet keeping this secret was, I felt, a rather uncomfortable affair. It seemed an intrusion to know so much about a reserved person which he did not know himself. When I next saw Gilbert Thorne, I was less at ease with him, for all unknown to himself, he was changed. That romance of his coming of age was always present to me. Could he miss it by conduct of his own? Lilian now and then hinted that he could. She mentioned Mat Thatcher, whose college career had scandalized his native town. She called attention to those "suspended" youths that the schoolmaster tutored. Their latest exploit had been setting the woods on fire, and nearly burning up the village of Still Waters.

"A boy is n't obliged to be a prig, either," I spoke up, "even if he does n't set woods on

fire. There are other ways of showing his spirit."

"Well said, Phœbe." I had my father to support me.

We saw no more of Mr. Christopher Sadler, but a little package arrived a week after his visit. It contained a gold thimble for "Miss Phœbe Callender." This was perhaps a delicate expression of that opinion about woman's sphere which Mr. Sadler had not had courage to express at our dinner-table.

My father exchanged marked newspapers with his old friend: the growth of Still Waters and the greatness of Iowa were thus compared. "Christopher shows no signs of changing his mind," my father would report from time to time, and with that we let the subject drop.

"This is the first time in all my life," I whispered to Tom, "that I *ever* heard of a fairy godfather!"

X

MISS McCRADY

WE sat at recess in the girls' dressing-room, for those were days before athletics for girls had arisen, and we spent our recess not out of doors, like the boys, but in eating jumbles and gingersnaps in a stuffy little room with the overshoes and umbrellas. "No eating in the schoolroom" was one of the rules that, on the whole, we thought it best to obey. Eating behind the lid of one's desk had its attractions, but cooky crumbs in one's Virgil or blots of butter on one's algebra cover were, after all, not so pleasant.

We preferred perches to seats, and windows, chair-arms, and settee-backs hung full of girls. I took a position in the window, that I might watch the game of ball in the yard below. Tom was there, panting, red-cheeked, Gilbert Thorne, and the West

boys, all running in the crisp, bright air. Meanwhile, I munched a doughnut and a pickle, and at the request of the other girls, closed the window.

"I can't bear her!" the conversation began.

"She's so sarcastic."

"She's so absent-minded! Sometimes she hardly seems to see you."

"She's so severe. It's your lesson or your life."

"Do you know what a mark she gave Amy? Marked her 6, just to pass, and Amy got 10 every time under Miss Lilley."

"I'm going straight up to her, and I'm going to ask what she means by giving me such a mark."

We egged one another on, precisely as we egged one another on to admire the second assistant, Miss Barrows, who was pronounced "the loveliest, sweetest thing." Each girl added her contribution.

"She encourages you to recite badly. She likes to hear what you'll say. I *loathe* that kind of a teacher."

"So do I! so do I!" we cried.

I firmly believed, at that point in my education, that the teacher had all the fun on her side, and to my mind, Miss McCrady was a good example of this. She seemed very much entertained by her class ; but that we might not have resented, if she had not ungratefully turned upon us, and set us down at a very low figure in our report-books. With hot-headed loyalty, we rallied around the injured members of our class, who were, it is true, the ne'er-do-weels of the school. We were most of us fairly well-mannered girls in our own homes, but now we fired one another to behave very badly at school. We conducted ourselves in sundry ways that could not be brought under the law, but that could annoy a teacher many times a day. There was no excuse for us : it was simply the cruelty of young animals.

“ Not that she seems to mind it much,” said Cora Duffin, in a disappointed voice. “ She tries to pretend she does n’t notice it. I’ve seen that kind of teacher before. They’re deep. They’ll come down on you some day.”

It was quite true that Miss Julia McCrady was a self-contained woman, who was not lavish of words or smiles. She was apparently a busy person, with many letters to write and to read, and with a necessity for catching mails and railway trains. If we had been in a different frame of mind, we might have called Miss McCrady handsome, with her fine black eyes and brilliant complexion. She seemed to us, by reason of her glasses, and several gray hairs, a person of incalculable age, till, by our usual methods, we found out that she was thirty-two. "How should you feel if you were thirty-two?" said the girl who had made the estimate.

I believe I put less spirit into my naughtiness after that. To be so old, and so far past the pleasures and pastimes of life, struck me as forlornness enough, and I felt no desire to add to the sombreness of Miss McCrady's existence.

Affairs came to a crisis with the examinations at the end of the term. I remember well one raging recess.

"She has dropped three girls!"

“*What?*”

“She has *dropped three girls!* They’ve got to take it all over again, every word of it.”

“We ought not to stand it — as a class. Let us go to Mr. Danvers, in a body; and if the principal won’t do anything, let us go to the superintendent.” So spoke our ring-leader, from between her teeth. She stood up very straight and tall. “I am in favor of action. I move that Phœbe Callender be a committee to complain.”

“What good would that do?” I said. “It’s not likely that Miss McCrady would resign, or that anybody would ask her to.”

“Then, girls, I move we don’t look at our lessons, — just sit and say we don’t know right round the class and look straight at the wall.”

I laughed, and our leader turned wrathfully upon me.

“She must be made to know what we think of it,” proclaimed Cora Duffin as from a platform.

“She’ll know before night,” the worst of us threatened.

Night came, and with it a piece of news spread about the town. Miss McCrady had resigned her post. It was reported on the best authority : the school superintendent had told the minister.

I met Eva West early the next morning, which happened to be Saturday.

“ Miss McCrady has resigned,” I said, and waited for the effect. She turned pale, and so did I. Another girl joined us. We were appalled at the deed we had done.

“ She was awfully bright.” We already spoke of Miss McCrady as if she were dead. “ She could be funny.”

“ She just made you learn. Tom said she was a teacher that knew what she was talking about. That was great praise from boys.”

“ She looked dreadfully tired after the examinations.”

“ I hope we did n’t hurt her feelings very much.”

“ I should rather think we did,” I answered gloomily.

“ And now she has resigned, and is going away, and we can never say anything.”

I looked up and down the road, and I was very miserable. I was thinking. I had to swallow hard before I could speak. "Girls, I have made up my mind. They wanted to make me a committee to complain. I'll *be* a committee, and beg her not to go away. I'd rather die, but I'll go." I tossed back my tears. "I'd better go alone. I could n't say it before anybody."

I gave myself no time to think about this painful interview, but walked straight up the street to Miss McCrady's boarding-place. It was striking ten by the town clock when I rang that dreadful doorbell.

"Miss McCrady ain't 't home. She 's comin' back this afternoon ter pack up. She won't be gone for good till Monday."

If it had been a trial to go to see Miss McCrady, it was torture to put it off. The day passed heavily and slowly. I tried to do cheerful things, it being a Saturday, but there was no holiday for such a conscience as mine.

Where would Miss McCrady go? where would she teach? how would she live? would her health suffer? A half dozen of us got

together that afternoon, and tormented ourselves with these questions. We felt ourselves responsible for Miss McCrady's future.

"Supposing Miss McCrady should die!"
We groaned.

"It does n't pay not to be fair. It all comes back on yourself this way. I have heard my father talk about fairness. They say women are n't fair. Oh, do you suppose it's true?"

"It's the first thing you want a teacher to be — fair. It's the first thing everybody ought to be."

We lashed ourselves into a frenzy of repentance.

"The college boys had their fitting algebra with her. What did they think?"

"Jim said there was n't any scrapping in that class. She could look a fellow in the eye. He said he guessed she could put 'em through if anybody could. He did n't analyze her character much."

"Phoebe, you *will* go, won't you? and tell her everything."

"I *must*;" and it being five o'clock, I rose to go.

This time Miss McCrady was at home, and sent word that I should be shown up to her room. I shall long remember the climbing of those stairs, and the figure in that stair carpet. Miss McCrady stood at the top, bright and smiling, looking so young I hardly knew her. Her glasses were off, her cheeks were red, and her hair was flying.

"Phœbe! You see I am in the midst of packing," she said joyously.

I, who had been looking very sad, had to brighten up a little.

Miss McCrady was standing on a chair and taking down pictures, apparently without a regret that she was making a wreck of her pretty room. She talked to me over her shoulder.

"Phœbe, you are just the one for company while I am about this stupid business. Could you help me a minute with this picture cord?"

"Miss McCrady, I came to tell you how very sorry we all are that you are going away."

A feeble speech it was, as the result of the

tremendous emotions of the last twenty-four hours.

“And so am I sorry,” said Miss McCrady, — “in some ways,” she added, and laughed a little.

Not in all ways, I thought, since she was to have no more of our troublesome science class.

“I shall miss my college boys.”

“They adore you,” was my translation of Tom’s “She’s all right.”

“Oh, do they?” said Miss McCrady, and actually blushed, as I took care to tell Tom.

“And I shall miss my girls, — my Phœbe, for one.”

If she went on like this, I should certainly begin to cry before I could deliver my message.

“Mr. Danvers, of course, has known this a long while, but he persuaded me to stay, up to the last minute, for the sake of your science class and the college algebra, — two such important classes, he thought. We have done a good bit of work this fall, have n’t we?”

I was too puzzled to find any words.

“Phœbe, should you like to see this photograph of Mr. Glynn? You know we are to be married in January.”

I must have turned pale, for I felt as if my heart had stopped beating. Then the color rushed to my face, and the tears to my eyes.

“Oh, I am so glad! I am so glad!”

It was Miss McCrady’s turn to be perplexed over this burst of feeling from one of her science class.

“I did n’t know! I did n’t know!” I cried again.

“I thought you all knew by this time. Mr. Danvers was quite free to speak of it, and I saw the superintendent yesterday and told him, and I talked with the minister. It is Mr. Rumsey who is going to marry us, at my home in Roxbury.”

“My sister is coming to take my place,” Miss McCrady went on. “I am sure you will make her happy, and she will love the school, as I have.”

There was some punishment in this, at any rate, though I am sure Miss McCrady was too

happy to think of punishing anybody, and I also believe she had been so happy for the last few months she had quite failed to notice our behavior.

“Which simply made you feel silly,” remarked the sensible member of our class; “and to feel silly at *our* age, ugh! Let’s talk about something else.”

Before I left Miss McCrady, I did manage to tell her how dreadfully we felt that she was going away. I said it at least six times in different ways, till she had to kiss me to prevent my saying it again. She made it easy for me to get away by sending messages to my mother and grandmother.

I hurried first to Eva West and the others, and telling my great piece of news was the best fun ever a girl had. As soon as their astonishment would let them speak, we fell to planning a wedding present that should adequately express our feelings.

XI

I HEAR MR. EMERSON LECTURE

“I REMEMBER I promised you last summer,” said my father, “when Mr. Emerson gave his Lyceum lecture in Concord this winter, we should all go over and hear him.”

“I am afraid it is very cold weather for a ten-mile expedition by night,” my mother answered.

“Hurrah, a sleigh ride !” cried Tom. “A sleigh ride’s more fun than a lecture.”

I thought so, too, but would not have said it, having been brought up in great reverence for Mr. Emerson.

“‘January twenty-seventh,’” read my father from the Still Waters paper, “and one of his best subjects.”

“It would be an impression the children would carry all their lives,” said my mother. “They have been too young before this ; but

now I notice how Phœbe and Tom begin to appreciate."

"Could n't we get a big sleigh that would hold a lot of us?" asked Tom. "Bert Thorne, for one."

"Oh, let me have Florence Fay to spend the night, please, mamma. Florence has read a whole volume of Mr. Emerson's Essays."

"That's more than Phœbe has, I warrant you."

"Yes, I have, Tom. I have read one essay, and almost another."

"I should like to have the party made up of young people," my father said thoughtfully. "I have read somewhere that the mission of Emerson is to youth and to genius. I am not sure of genius in this company, but I should like nothing better than to set a row of these young folks down before Mr. Emerson for an hour or two. Let Tom and Phœbe each invite three or four of their young friends."

"And have a supper when we get home?" said Tom anxiously.

"Won't they think it's funny? A lecture party! instead of a dance."

"Tell them it's my party," my father answered. "I am rather a sober person, they all know."

These were the preliminaries.

Not long after the sun had set on the twenty-seventh of January, the party assembled at our house, in a great state of chatter and laughter. The long sleigh came up to the door, crunching the hard, cold snow, while the horses pawed and pranced and shook their bells. Over the road we sped, between still fields, past snow-bound farmhouses, through a gay-lighted village, out again by white pastures and frozen waters. The warm, dark pines were the friendliest things we met in the white waste.

The jingling sleigh-bells set the tune, and we all chimed in. To our delight, one of the horses tried to run away, and no wonder, with all the laughter and singing at his heels.

"He feels dreadful highty-tighty," explained the driver. "It's the cold weather and the bells."

We young folks felt a wonderful sympathy with the runaway. I looked at Florence now and then, and laughed out for sheer happiness.

“Phœbe Gay, you are such an enjoyer!”

“I can’t help it!” I answered.

“You need n’t have been afraid of Phœbe Gay’s long dresses, mother,” said Lilian. “She will always be child enough.”

“Oh dear, we are almost there!” was very soon the cry. As we reached the boundary of Concord, my father gave us a little historical lecture. “We are entering the town by the very road the British took.”

Now Still Waters was a respectable and well-to-do town; there was not a town with fresher paint in all Massachusetts: but Concord was respectable and well-to-do, and much more,—it was literary and historical, and the envy of all the towns about. Still Waters usually took the superiority of Concord in very good part, and having not a battle or an author to its name, made many pilgrimages to the shrines of its fortunate neighbor.

“By this very road,” my father repeated, “the British entered the town.”

I was fresh from school and the American Revolution. I hated the British vehemently.

“At this old tavern Major Pitcairn stirred his brandy with his finger, and swore he’d stir the blood of the rebels before night.”

I raged against the redcoats, and in memory of the swaggering, bloody-fingered Pitcairn, I gave a vindictive look at the peaceful old inn under the elms.

If my father and mother had not had a firm hand upon the party, there might have been mutiny and no lecture.

“Oh, can’t we keep on to Boston?” the giddiest of us cried.

As we swung around to the door of the Concord Town Hall, jumped out, and mounted the steps, the impressiveness of the occasion began to be felt. Earnest people were entering the house, people who spoke low and walked soberly. The levity of the Still Waters party died down.

Now it chanced that I, of all our company, had something happen to me. I had been delayed at the foot of the stairway by a troublesome cloak-fastening. When I followed

the rest up the stairs, there chanced to be just beside me an old gentleman, tall, slender, a little stooping; but I did not see his face until we reached the top together and were about to enter the hall. Then he held open the door for me to pass in before him; and looking up, I knew the wise, sweet face, and saw that it was Mr. Emerson himself, who was making way for the schoolgirl. I walked to my seat with such a sense of distinction as I had not known before in my plain little life.

“What has happened to Phœbe Gay? What makes her look so uplifted?” they whispered, but I could not have told them. It was confided to Florence on the way home.

Meanwhile, Mr. Emerson was walking up the aisle, carrying his own little lamp, which he preferred for reading his manuscript. He stood at the desk, modest, deprecating, with that first charm of the speaker, deference for his audience, as if he, on his part, were ready to learn from us. The beautiful courtesy with which Mr. Emerson met his hearers made of them courteous listeners. Most of

what he said we boys and girls did not understand: that I confess to begin with. Yet now and then there would come a sentence quite by itself, as if it had dropped from the sky, clear and bright as a star: a sentence that would shine in the dark. I can hear it still: the musical voice, the fine deliberation of the first words, and the quick, emphatic close. There were sentences like shooting stars, and there were spaces between filled with luminous haze, — as I felt it then, and express it now. The letter we did not understand, but the spirit caught up our hearts. We listened, and somehow we learned and believed that to live was a privilege, and that ideal things were real and true and possible.

There was another pleasure I had no name for yet. This was a keen, pungent sensation; it was the tingling taste of a thought. I was finding out what people tamely call “intellectual pleasure.” It was the wit of Mr. Emerson — his “fun” — and his wisdom — “common sense” — that I, for my part, relished; while Florence Fay, beside me, dilated with the poetry of his discourse.

Her eyes were beautiful with the reflection of beautiful thoughts.

I remember that row of faces. Tom had the bad habit of listening with mouth open, which no amount of family discipline had cured. He now paid Mr. Emerson the tribute of open mouth and blank countenance, and though the expression was not a happy one, it meant, I know, that ideas were taking hold of Tom. Nor would Gilbert Thorne have had us suppose that he was wrought upon by the speaker. He listened with a little frown, which was his way of paying attention since he began to fit for college. The proper Wests, I think, forgot all about good manners, and listened politely because they could n't help it. Cora Duffin had been invited on the ground that she was our next-door neighbor. My mother added, "It is a kind of influence Cora needs."

When I delivered the invitation, Cora gave a shout, which was the Duffin form of laugh. "Ho! what an idea! I don't mind the sleigh ride, though."

I cannot say that Cora showed any imme-

diate change of character under the influence of Mr. Emerson, though she looked up furtively at him, as if expecting to be improved. I know she suspected my mother of designs upon her manners.

We rode home by starlight, for the moon had gone down. There was a fitness in keeping on under a heaven of bright stars, amid pure white fields.

"That sort of talk lifts the very hair on your forehead," said Roger Waite to my father.

I sat between Gilbert Thorne and Florence Fay, and we were such good friends that we spoke hardly a word for the first mile.

At last Gilbert Thorne turned to me. "What are you so still about, Phœbe?"

"I am still about a great many, many things," I laughed.

"Give us a specimen."

"I could n't tell."

"You always did tell when you were little."

"Then I had little easy thoughts. Oh, now I can't express myself," I sighed.

We were all shamefaced about talking of

the lecture. I suppose it was what people call self-consciousness that had overtaken us; but there is a wisdom of fifteen, a wisdom of shyness. The great awakening from thoughtlessness to thoughtfulness should be silent as the rest of Nature's processes.

We should not have been human boys and girls if we had not tumbled out of the sleigh at our door with shouts and laughter, and forgotten all about high themes for the next half hour. Wholesome hot chocolate was offered us, but Tom set out to forage for mince pies, returned with two, and presented the first piece to my mother. I am happy to say she ate it, though rather guiltily. That was Tom's method of conducting his mischief, to turn my mother or my grandmother into the ringleader. Then all went well. It was never my father who was so entrapped. He stood over us now, and protested against mince pie at midnight, and especially after an evening of such lofty intercourse.

Florence showed me next day some lines that the poet Matthew Arnold had written in his volume of Emerson's Essays.

“ I am going to copy them into mine,” said Florence, all aglow, “ for that was *exactly* the way Mr. Emerson made us feel, — oh, did n’t he, Phœbe ?

‘ Strong is the soul, and wise, and beautiful ;
The seeds of godlike power are in us still ;
Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes, if we will ! ’ ”

XII

FAINT HEART NE'ER WON

It began with the conversation at our supper-table on the evening when our family had returned from the dedication of the library in Concord. On our drive home we had discussed the new building, the speeches, and Mr. Emerson's address on "Books and Reading."

"And now what we want," my father concluded, stirring his tea, "is a public library in Still Waters."

"We are far behind Concord in public spirit," my mother replied.

"It appears to me I have heard that said too often since I came to live in Still Waters. The town likes to talk about its own lack of public spirit."

"I tell you what, grandma," cried Tom, "they knew what they were about when they named this old town Still Waters."

“ Yet what a quiet, tranquil place to live one’s days ! ” my mother said, for she was by nature a peacemaker on every possible subject. “ We have but few rich people,” she continued. “ Who is there but the Fays ? ”

“ And Miss Horatia Budd.”

“ Mr. Fay is very generous, but you can’t expect him to do everything. Miss Budd, though ! ”

“ Every town has a curmudgeon,” I remarked with my wisest air. “ She ’s ours.”

“ She ’s the one to give us a library.” My father was not often so jocose. “ You ’d better ask her, Phœbe.”

“ I bet you don’t dare ring her doorbell, Phœbe Gay,” said Master Tom.

“ I have rung it only once, myself,” my mother laughed. “ I went to ask her, since none of the other ladies would, if she were willing to give something to the fire sufferers. She complained it was always sufferers ; if it was n’t one kind, then ’t was another. If you gave to one, you must give to the other, and if you gave to the other, you must give to the next. There was no end to it. ’T was give,

give, give. No, she did n't feel called upon. Folks must learn to be more careful of their karrersene lamps."

"Now I succeeded better," said my grandmother. "I saw her in her garden in her old sunbonnet, and I stepped up and asked her over the fence for a contribution to the Famine Fund. She gave me twenty-five cents."

"But what is to become of her money? She has only distant cousins, who have been given to understand that their attentions are not wanted."

"She ought to give Still Waters a library and a park and a band-stand and statues and fountains, — go for her, Phœbe!"

The next day, as usual, Florence Fay and I talked matters over. She had listened rapt to Mr. Emerson's discourse upon books, and had come home ardently desiring to found a library out of her own pocket money.

I mentioned Miss Budd. Even Florence Fay made a comical face.

"Would n't it be *fun* just to ask her?"

Florence was timid, but she had a dash of knight-errantry about her; she burned to do

deeds. It was clear that to win over Miss Horatia Budd to the giving of a library would be a deed of no mean magnitude. The size of this undertaking was all that we could have asked for.

“Of course they never supposed I would, not even Tom. Would n’t they be surprised?” Already I saw the walls of the new library rising before the astonished eyes of the community.

“I never could go alone,” said I. “Oh, let’s go soon, before we get frightened. Let’s go Tuesday afternoon, and let’s wear our prettiest clothes. Which shall speak to her first?”

“I believe in alphabetical order,” Florence answered. “Then it comes out fair for everybody.”

“Ha! I shall say, ‘Good afternoon, Miss Budd,’ and the real speech will come second. You will get that, Miss F.”

“Phœbe,” said Florence, when Tuesday afternoon had arrived, and we were already halfway up Miss Budd’s hill, — “Phœbe, this is perfectly crazy. This is the first time I

ever knew you to do a perfectly wild thing. I am the one usually. Let us go home."

"Faint heart ne'er won" —

"Oh, but a fair lady would be nothing to this old woman."

"Florence Fay, do you want this town of Still Waters to have a library, or don't you?"

"Very well." Florence walked faster.

Miss Budd lived in a fine old house, but she chose to inhabit only the back part of it, with her maid Nancy, who was a match for Miss Budd in queerness. Old Nancy stopped pumping, and stood and watched us as we approached the house.

"Good-afternoon," said I from a safe distance.

"Ther' ain't nobody 't home; ther' ain't nobody 't home," and she shook her head hard at us.

That was half true, for I saw Miss Budd's sunbonnet down in the hollow.

My grandmother, in trying to give every fellow creature his due, had pointed out that Miss Budd seemed to be fond of outdoor things. "I've heard, besides, she could n't do enough for her old father."

I thought it fortunate to approach Miss Budd among her apple-trees rather than among her parlor chairs and tables. Plainly, her first feeling towards a visitor was one of offense; she threw back her head and looked at us. Florence had on a scarlet jacket, and it arrested Miss Budd, as if she had been a wild, shy creature of the woods.

I stood still, too, and looked at her, with as uncomfortable a feeling as I can remember in the course of my youth. The mission of young people to their elders was not then so well recognized as it was at the end of the century, and I suddenly had a sinking sensation, the feeling that I was doing an impertinent thing, if only because I was young and Miss Budd was old.

But here we were, and Florence was waiting for me to do something. Quaking (and it served me right), I advanced upon Miss Budd.

“Stand still just where y’ are, both of ye.”

This greeting threw me quite out of my calculations.

“Keep right under that apple-tree bough till I take a picture of ye in my mind.”

This was dreadfully disconcerting. It made us feel like children, rather than like public-spirited citizens of Still Waters, about to propose a large public benefaction.

"Those are Harrington sweets," said Miss Budd; "good for bakin'. Boys and girls like 'em raw. They 're *apt* to come wanderin' in here, — boys especially; but help yourselves."

Florence Fay and I looked at each other in horror.

"Thank you very much," we answered, without regard to alphabetical order.

"I don't know as I know what your names are," said Miss Horatia Budd.

We introduced ourselves.

"*Phæbe*, now, sounds like old times. Phoebe was my grandmother's name."

My library speech was working farther and farther away.

Florence was lost in imagination of a grandmother of Miss Horatia Budd, as she told me afterwards, and said not a word to help.

"I know your folks, both of you. I know

all about 'em," and Miss Budd closed her lips firmly on the remark, as if it were little good she knew of Fays or Callenders.

"Well, it's a pleasant afternoon," she said at last, with the effect of rising from one of her own parlor chairs, in order to dismiss us. I had seen my mother help awkward boys out of the room in the same way, when they did not know how to finish a call.

It was a terrible moment for me. Should I, with Florence Fay there to see, turn miserably around and run home?

"Miss Budd," I faltered,—"Miss B-Budd, we hope there is going to be a public library in Still Waters, and we wondered if you would"—

"Who sent ye to me?"

"We came ourselves," I answered, in my firmest voice. "We knew you had always lived in Still Waters, and your father and your grandfather, and we thought you would like to have it a memorial to your family here forever and forever, after everybody's dead."

This cheerful suggestion seemed to have an effect.

"It ought to be built of good stone and mortar, then."

I was delighted. "You would have a tablet."

"A kind of a tombstone up over the door," she assented, to my joy.

"And you would hang your father's portrait in the library."

"And like as not my own."

"Oh, yes," a little less joyfully.

"It's a fine idea," said Miss Horatia Budd, with sarcasm now apparent; "but you can go home and tell your father I shan't do anything of the kind."

I looked at Florence for help. "Miss Budd, our fathers don't know we came. They would n't have let us, probably. It was Phœbe's own idea. Because you know, Miss Budd, a town that has n't a public library is n't a town that people want to come to live in. They would rather go and live in Concord."

"Concord! Ugh!"

I gave Florence a quick look, and she described the beauties of the new Concord library.

"So they tell me! So they tell me!" said Miss Budd sharply and angrily.

"Air you a reader?" She turned on me. I tried to convey that I thought well of books, but that I was no such reader as Florence Fay.

"Well, I'm one myself, though I don't see many books. They're expensive to buy. I suppose, if I was to build a library, you'd let me take out books myself."

"Oh, yes," we cried, "as many as you wanted."

"Huh!" replied Miss Budd. "Well, I shan't do anything of the kind. Think of the money."

"It's the best way anybody could spend money."

Miss Budd looked at me as if platitudes from young people were more than she could put up with. It was Florence she turned to.

"Give me a book, and the longest winter evenings, I've always got company. Folks think I'm lonely. I ain't a bit."

"That's the very reason you would *enjoy* giving a library, Miss Budd," said Florence

ardently. "You'd think of all the loneliness a town library was preventing."

"I ain't ready for any such outlay. How much did your father calculate?"

I had heard twenty thousand dollars mentioned.

Miss Budd held up her hands. "There may be folks that have got such sums to give. If they choose to do it, I don't criticise. Before you go, just stand together under that tree."

Miss Budd held her head to one side, as if she had been a photographer. We certainly "looked pleasant," and so did Miss Horatia Budd, as we bade her good-by.

We were at the foot of the hill before we discussed our visit.

"Did you ever?"

"Never in all my life," said Florence. "I like her. She is a character, and most people are n't."

"I am glad they are n't," was my opinion.

"She has n't so very much to think about, and I believe she will think a great deal about our visit. I like to think of her thinking of us."

"That is because you have read George Eliot so much," said I respectfully. "Miss Budd is like a character in Dickens, though. He would make her give that library. That is why I like Dickens."

Florence and I differed as to the success of our undertaking. I predicted that we should never hear one word from Miss Horatia Budd. Weeks and months passed by, and Florence, too, lost hope. March came, and March tenth, the date of Town Meeting. My father came home from business at noon, made a careful toilet, and was at the Town Hall by two o'clock. Stores were closed. Farmers' horses from the "districts" and "quarters" and "corners" of Still Waters occupied every hitching-post on Main Street. Their owners represented the landed interest, and were the conservatives in town politics. "The town" was the progressive faction. Long were the contests of the two parties, lasting far into the dusk. Meanwhile, the feminine part of Still Waters waited supper.

At last my father came, and by the way he took off his overcoat, we could see he had news to tell.

“Don't let us delay supper any longer. All of you come to the table, and then ” —

“I am afraid it's gas going to be introduced,” said my grandmother, who belonged to the conservatives.

“I should be glad to hear it was a water supply.” My mother was of the liberal party.

“Well,” said my father slowly, “we've got our town library at last !”

And I, helping the family to apple sauce, must sit quiet and listen, — not jump, or dance, or shout !

“Who do you suppose has given it ?”

“Oh, who ?” I gasped.

“What did I tell you months ago ? Miss Horatia Budd was the woman that had the money ; and by George, she's done it !”

We were all too astonished to speak, and my father was able to continue.

“It seems the old lady has some family sentiment, wants to have the library a memorial to her father, and to have his portrait hung where you will see it as you go in.”

I gasped another “Oh !”

“She said she had been thinking of it a long while. She wrote a very good letter, — said she was fond of books, poor soul! This will make folks think better of her right off.”

“I always told you she had her good qualities,” nodded my grandmother.

My brother Tom was looking hard at me. “I tell you what, — don’t you remember last fall, — I bet ’t was Phœbe!”

I looked at my mother and then at my father, and then, — how absurd! my eyes filled with tears, and I could not speak a word.

“Phœbe, you’re a great girl,” said Tom admiringly, and it was sweet to hear.

“Tell us the story, my dear child.”

“Upon my word,” my father said, when I had ended, “youthful audacity has its uses. It would never have occurred to me to tackle Miss Horatia Budd.”

“’T was you, your very self, that first suggested it, papa.”

“My poor joke has turned out a very good one.”

Finally, my father advised us to keep this little matter to ourselves. It was hardly a subject to be gossiped about. We all agreed, and to this day, only the Fays and the Calenders know how Still Waters came to have a library.

XIII

I VISIT NEW YORK

It was at the golden wedding that cousin Anne Dudley drew me away to a sofa.

“I remember little Miss Phœbe Gay,” she said.

“That you sent the beautiful doll to. I don’t play with her, but I look at her still. She is waiting for little Rose to grow big enough. Rose is my niece.”

“Aunt Phœbe, I wish you could leave your cares and make me a visit in New York.”

“Oh!” I cried. “Oh, thank you; but I have to go to school. School is my ‘care.’”

“Your spring vacation would be a pleasant season for a visit. Let us agree upon that,” said this delightful cousin Anne.

It did, indeed, seem a date so far off as to temper my joy in the invitation. This was, however, the deliberate way in which middle-

aged people managed affairs, I had noticed. Six months, — a whole long winter to wait, which apparently cousin Anne thought nothing of. Still, this was far better than that form of invitation that tried me so when I was still younger: “You must come to see us some time, dear,” — *some time*, when I wanted to come to-morrow! I did Cousin Anne the injustice to wonder if she would remember the invitation. When I looked at the parlor sofa where we had sat together, I wondered if I should see New York. The little New Englander, jealous for her Boston, has still a great curiosity as to the wonders and splendors of the huge foreign-American city, on the edge of Europe. I had a vague idea that New York was for all the world, and Boston for those who could appreciate it. I saw that I should rise in Florence Fay’s esteem if I visited New York, though she would still be ahead of me by all the distance of Europe. Moreover, several times during the winter, Cora Duffin said, “I thought you said you were going to New York. *When* are you going?” — which was a way the Duffins had.

I had on this occasion the cordial consent of my family, though when one of Florence's fashionable aunts, whom we had never seen, asked me to visit her with her little niece, the invitation was very politely refused. I had gone about feeling injured for weeks afterwards; all the more, that I was told, "There are a great many things, dear, that you will understand better when you are older," — that humiliating formula for dealing with youth.

Now it was quite different. "I have been glad to bring up my children in the country," said my mother. "Still, I want them to have advantages."

This word "advantages" I pondered. It seemed to be something different from plain education, which I was getting regularly and industriously at school. Cousin Anne Dudley, it appeared, was a person who had had "advantages." On the other hand, I heard of poor So-and-So, who "had had no 'advantages;'" and my desire for these mysterious benefits grew apace.

"Not but that a girl country-born and

country-bred can be a lady in all circumstances, but" —

"You don't want Phœbe to be green," said Tom. I have often seen the dignified members of the family indebted to Tom for a word.

The letter came, — a kind letter, naming a date two days before the school vacation began. I entreated, but my mother was firm: "No, dear." That our parents owed us apologies was an idea that sprang up in the next generation. Florence Fay was quickly confided in, and Cora Duffin was informed within an hour. My sister Lilian came over to inspect my wardrobe. My father laid out some handsome new bank-bills; he supposed that New York required a ball-dress, — spangles and frills and what not.

"Papa is quite right," said Lilian. "One pretty gown, and she is ready for anything." That vague, delightful *anything*!

Yet when, a fortnight later, that same pretty gown hung in the very large closet of a very large room of a very large city house, I hid my face in it, as homesick a little coun-

try girl as ever was seen. Things were so large and handsome and bright and polished, and the floors were so slippery, — it was the slipperiness that made me most homesick, — and the butler was so stern and awful, and the maid so grave and silent when she put my things away! My own dear home was easy as an old shoe, — why had I left it for these doubts and dreads and fears? At dinner I was to meet for the first time cousin Anne's husband, who probably would be even more awful than the butler. Could this be Phoebe Gay, who at home was nowadays not even afraid of ministers! I stole downstairs to dinner, sure that I was too early or too late. Great rosewood doors opened into the drawing-room, and I caught sight of cousin Anne bending over the fire, tongs in hand, and smiling over her shoulder at me. The fire-light and the smile ended my fit of homesickness, and when cousin Anne said, "This is Mr. Dudley, — Uncle Dan, the boys and girls call him," — then my relief was complete. Mr. Dudley was not in the least like the butler, but a jovial old gentleman, who de-

clared he and his wife were a lonely old couple, who had to depend on young visitors. "We must have in our young neighbors, Paul and his sister."

The dinner went off better than I had expected, though strange dishes were passed to me, to which I helped myself as well as I could with strange forks and spoons. My new uncle entered into my visit with great energy. My ten days were mapped out, with not a moment wasted from breakfast to bedtime. Cousin Anne and I set forth gayly the next morning, and went up and down among the shops. I saw things at first all a blur of shapes and colors; then some began to look pretty and others ugly, and I found the choosing and deciding an interesting matter. Mrs. Dudley knew instantly which was the beautiful thing; I had to think and look again, and then perhaps change my mind.

"You are going to be a woman of taste, Phoebe. You have only to see a great deal. Tell me which rug you like best in this window."

Presently she asked me which watch I

thought prettiest in a wonderful trayful placed before us. "Take plenty of time, dear. I see my own favorite."

"I *think* that one," I decided at last, and to my delight, it was cousin Anne's own choice. What do you suppose were my feelings when I found it on my bureau that night, marked "P. G. C."? I believe cousin Anne looked even happier than I did. "That good lady has her notions of fun," said uncle Dan.

In the evening a young lady called, with her brother.

"These are our neighbors across the way, Paul and Esther," explained cousin Anne. "We are fortunate. Not many people have old-fashioned neighbors in New York."

Miss Esther was a year older than I, but much farther advanced in young-ladyhood.

"Don't you find New York very jolly, Miss Callender?"

"Oh, yes. I am having *such* a good time!" I answered, and immediately felt young and countrified.

"Have you met many people yet?"

Now I had had a very successful day

socially : I had learned to love cousin Anne and to call her aunt ; I had got to be the best of friends with uncle Dan ; I had made the butler smile, and the lady's-maid giggle, — but I had not “ met ” many people.

Cousin Anne then explained her plans for a party, which deeply engaged Miss Esther's attention.

Mr. Paul I had no trouble in liking. He was the first real young man that treated me like a real young lady. He was a senior at Harvard, and to my mind there was nothing beyond that for romantic interest. Mr. Paul, if he pleased, might be a very commonplace young man, — the word “ Harvard ” was enough. As it happened, he was neither commonplace nor remarkable : he was “ nice.” Before he went away that evening, he had invited me to Class-day, the very next June.

“ I shall go to Paul's Class-day, and I will take you, Phoebe,” said Mrs. Dudley.

“ Oh, *oh!* ” I cried, and uncle Dan caught me and danced me round and round to help me express my joy.

The next day, uncle Dan insisted, must be

for down-town sight-seeing. So I went to the top of the tallest buildings; I visited the Stock Exchange; I was shown the wonders of an ocean steamship, the Battery, the harbor; and Uncle Dan pointed out the huge piers where some visionaries had started the mad project of a Brooklyn bridge.

“I don’t suppose you like sugar-plums?” said Uncle Dan by way of closing the morning. “Step in here a minute. Did you ever hear of Huyler’s?”

I drove with aunt Anne to Central Park, which was the country glorified. It was April, and everything was soft gray and brown; carriages rolled past, with beautiful ladies, in lovelier bonnets than I had ever dreamed of.

One day I saw Edwin Booth act Hamlet, and I paced up and down my room afterwards as if I had been Florence Fay, instead of the girl I usually was. I was taken to a Symphony concert, but liked the music less than my grandmother’s tunes. What I did enjoy was a gay hand-organ under my window every morning, for in the country we had but two or three a summer. It set my spirits dancing for the day.

“You like hand-organs?” said Mr. Paul; and the next morning, a hand-organ began to play under the window at seven o’clock, and then another, and another, till uncle Dan appeared and shouted, “Here, be off with you. What do you mean?”

Five minutes after, there was another, and so on through the day, till the whole street rose in rebellion. “The rascals!” cried uncle Dan. “There’s another one! Why my house, I should like to inquire? There’s something in this. Are they serenading Phœbe?”

This was probably so near the truth that I blushed very red, and looked at the border of my plate.

Aunt Anne took me to call upon several of her older friends. We visited an artist’s studio, and we paid our respects to a famous author. I saw a lady who had been at foreign courts and had talked with kings and queens; and I saw the wife of a poet, who with her husband had paid a visit to my favorite English poet.

“‘O brave new world that has such people in ’t!’” cried Miranda; and so did Phœbe

Gay, or words to that effect ! Shakespeare knew the heart of a young girl.

I learned sad things, too, in this new sight of the great world. I saw people so poor that I was puzzled and distressed. I saw faces sadder than I could account for. Aunt Anne told me about the pleasant side of her charities, but back of them I could make out worlds and worlds that had never entered my ken.

“ Don’t think too much about it yet, dear. Wait till you are older and can help,” said aunt Anne. I was light-hearted the next moment, in spite of myself. How could you keep down the spirits of a girl who had a beautiful new watch, a party the next Thursday, and Harvard Class-day in June ?

I think the best of the party was describing it afterwards to Florence. Nothing that I ever did was quite complete till I had turned it into something to tell Florence Fay.

“ I wore my ball-dress, which was simply the prettiest white dress I ever had, and aunt Anne gave me pink roses to carry.”

“ You know you looked too sweet for anything, Phœbe Gay. Say you did ! ”

“Aunt Anne called it a girl and boy party, early to come and early to go. I stood up beside her, and had everybody introduced to me.”

“You *received*. Were n’t you frightened?”

“I should have been if aunt Anne had n’t treated them just like boys and girls, and called them by their first names and asked them how their mothers were, just exactly as my mother does.”

“Tell me what *everybody* wore.”

“They were not ‘out,’ so they wore very simple dresses, only such lovely colors! The boys had very nice manners.”

“Not nicer than Gilbert Thorne or Tom Callender?”

“Not when Gilbert and Tom try.”

“Which did you like best?” Florence asked searchingly.

“Oh, I liked Mr. Paul, and I’m not going to say I did n’t. He did n’t really belong at this party, he is so old, — as much as twenty-one. He had to escort his sister.”

Then followed confidences about Miss Esther, and Florence declared she could n’t bear

that girl! "I guess you know a good deal more Virgil than she does, anyway," said Florence. "I'd rather hear about her brother. A senior,—he must know lots of Latin, and Greek, too. Things I shall never know," sighed Florence.

"He told me the names of all the Latin books he had read," said I, proud of Mr. Paul's accomplishments.

"That was to impress you," Florence replied sagely. "I see you were impressed. Were Latin books all you talked about?"

"We talked about *everything*," Florence drew back a little.

"Go on about the party," she said.

"Mr. Paul belongs to the Harvard Glee Club."

"What did you do at your party, pray?"

"He sang. They all sang college songs, girls as well as boys. Then we had Celebrities. There was the most wonderful man behind a screen, and he came out looking first like one famous person and then like another. The one of us that guessed the most got a prize. Such fun!"

"I hope it was n't Mr. Paul that got the prize."

"Then there was a Swedish lady that sang songs that Jenny Lind sang."

"And no dancing?"

"When there was time for it. I danced the Lancers with — whom do you suppose? uncle Dan!"

"I've no doubt you were the belle of the evening. The country girl in her white dress always is, in the story books. What fun to see you surrounded by admirers, Phoebe Gay!"

"I was n't at all. I just had a good time."

Florence persisted. "Tell me the compliments."

"There was only one. It was uncle Dan's. I'll never tell."

"What did Mr. Paul have to say?"

"He did n't seem to notice that I looked any different from every other day."

"Well, that was polite, just to take for granted that you were the prettiest, sweetest" —

"*Florence!*"

"I suppose you had ice-cream and all sorts of goodies?"

I gave a brilliant account of the supper, — the flowers, the lights, the china, and the pretty things to eat.

We then took up another incident of my visit. "Tell me all over again about Hamlet," said Florence, with an impassioned voice.

Long afterwards I discovered that my friends at home had been a little anxious about the effect of my visit.

"Will she come home quite contented?" they had pondered. They did not know how many times I had had that sweet, sad, unreasonable yearning for the old haircloth sofa, and the face of the sitting-room clock, and the very cut and color of the lamp-shade, — which all meant Home; and how I had come to pity aunt Anne that her house was empty and still, while ours was full of brothers and sisters, birthdays, letters, arrivals and departures, — all the life and love and interests of a large family. Not that I was so foolish as to despise wealth. I had my first lesson in "uncovetous admiration." As the little John Ruskin went home from Warwick Castle sure that it was pleasanter to live in a plain house

and have Warwick Castle to admire than to live in Warwick Castle and have nothing to admire, so I went home, having learned a great deal about the enjoyment of things I could not have.

“Welcome home ; welcome home, dear.” They said it with a little deprecating tone that I think I hugged out of them pretty quickly. Yes, the ceilings were low, and the stairs were narrow, but “everything looks so *dear!*” I whispered, “Mamma, I did n’t tell you in my letter how homesick I was at first. I cried.”

“Dear child !” said my grandmother.

“We have missed you every day, my daughter.” My father laid his hand on my shoulder.

“What is home without a Phoebe? Hullo, *where ’d you get that college pin?*” said Thomas Callender, with fearful distinctness.

XIV

HARVARD CLASS-DAY

“THERE was dancing on the green,” my mother continued, “in those days when I used to go to Harvard Commencement.”

I gave a little sigh for that romantic time.

“We wore white muslin dresses, very full and very spreading, and large hats, with long ribbon streamers.”

“And then you danced and danced?”

“I remember dancing with Governor Green, as he was afterward, — with Warren Green,” said my mother, smiling the faintest little smile into her work-basket.

“Where was my father?” I asked, with considerable spirit.

“I was seventeen, and I had never seen your father.”

I was more jealous still; a governor, too!

“That was long ago, yet I came across those

old Commencement ribbons the other day, all garlands and flowers.”

“Oh, let me wear them with my white dress,” I pleaded.

“If they are not too faded, — with all my heart.”

It was hard to fix a mind on school that was running over with Harvard Class-day. Even school had an air of excitement, for Tom, Gilbert Thorne, and the West boys were soon to take their examinations for college. It made them vastly more interesting to us girls; although they were considerably less than freshmen, the glamour of Harvard was already upon them. It even gave me added importance that I had a brother about to enter college. The plain High School became full of dreams and hopes and sweet prophesyings. It seems a very temple of Youth, as one looks back over the years. The great romance of education, — the daily victory of lessons learned, difficulties overcome, deeds done, — and school deeds are none of the meanest, — all this thrilled through me, in that sixteenth year of my age. Moreover, at this epoch,

the fact that education led up to Harvard Class-day lent it a charm hardly to be calculated.

I was happy that my father and mother were going to Class-day, too ; for we all had invitations from our cousin Jack Gurney. Aunt Anne had written that she had spoken first for Phœbe, and her own pleasure would be spoiled if she could not have a young companion for Class-day. She loved to look into happiness through a young girl's eyes, especially on a Class-day. So I was given into aunt Anne's care, and was carried away by her to a hotel in Boston, where were many new and wonderful experiences.

As we drove out to Cambridge, aunt Anne said, " We are not likely to see our host till we go to his spread at noon. The seniors are very busy."

This I appreciated when we reached the college, for there I saw young gentlemen in evening dress and shining high hats hurrying hither and thither, till at last they fell into line, and stood waiting to march into Appleton Chapel.

“There is Jack Gurney! There is Mr. Paul!”

“How is it you tell ’em apart?” said uncle Dan. “Yet some of these boys will grow into fine-looking judges and ministers and railroad presidents.”

To my mind, this was a dreary vision to take the place of our radiant scene.

There were “exercises;” and I had never listened to a doctor of divinity with more grave and reverent attention than I bestowed upon these young orators. I treasured their wisdom, and repeated their words to Florence Fay when I went home. I told her of the inspired young poet who compared life to the ocean, very elaborately. That was a fine thought, it struck me, that we had to sail our ship through storm as well as calm. Florence was of the opinion that she had heard this before. I wondered how the class historian dared to crack jokes—and such slangy jokes—in the ears of the Faculty; how the class dared break loose in those sacred precincts, with such an uproar of applause. When they sang the class song, to their lovely tune

of "Fair Harvard," my heart overflowed, and I had to fix my eyes on a stone pillar to keep back tears.

I paid strict attention to the last word that was spoken, though all around me sat beautiful young ladies in distracting dresses. When they poured out of the dim chapel into the sunlight, it was "'a garden of girls,' indeed," said aunt Anne.

"I am glad to get out," was uncle Dan's reply. "I went off into a little doze when I found the young fellow was well agoing with his piece. Did you say the next thing was a cold bite?"

We sauntered across the green, which was flowered with rose and azure and lilac gowns, and with gay-blooming parasols.

Aunt Anne liked my mother's flowery Commencement ribbons, which I wore at my throat and belt and upon my broad white hat. "They look as if they had been gathered in an old-fashioned garden."

For the first time I entered college cloisters, and meditated respectfully upon the arduous life of thought and study that went

on behind those numbered doors. I had expected that books and maps and diagrams would meet my eye, and Mr. Paul's study was a surprise to me. I believe Mr. Paul's rooms were "æsthetic," — a word we had just begun to hear then. They had deep, cushioned window-seats, piled with pillows in "new" shades; a dismal-colored wall paper, the background of pictures and trophies from all quarters of the globe. There was no chair or sofa that required one to sit up straight, and the upholstery was anything but monastic. I suspect the study had been violently put in order for our visit, for through a door half open was visible a wild heap of college properties.

"H'm," said Uncle Dan to himself, "what did I hear the old professor say?—'You can't bring up a scholar on that carpet.'"

"Is n't that rather a narrow view, dear?"

Mr. Paul had by this time returned to us, and was ready to convey us down the corridor to the suite of rooms where he and several friends "spread" together.

"Never mind Mr. Dudley and me," aunt

Anne was saying. "Take care of Phœbe." It was then I heard uncle Dan quoting to his wife something from Lord Chesterfield about "the joy and titter of youth."

Those bright college rooms were full, to be sure, of "the joy and titter of youth."

"Is this your first Class-day, Miss Callender?" Why did they all ask me that, — those experienced youths? Everything seemed to be "first" in my sixteenth year: I was continually owning up to it. I had hoped that these young gentlemen would mistake me for eighteen, I being, as my grandmother said, "well grown for my years." The young men I met that day were very modest as to their ages, and made me feel quite their equal. There were young ladies, however, that carried themselves with a great air, ordered even seniors about, and stood up like tall pink roses in a black circle of laughing, bantering adorers. How I looked up to those able young ladies, who could handle so many admirers at once! Yet I had a good time of my own, and had no need to envy them. There was such gay music from one room,

and such a festive fragrance of roses and coffee from another, and Mr. Paul was so kind! It was his sister Esther that I heard saying crossly, "Where is Paul? Oh, that little country thing, — if she *is* the niece of Mrs. Daniel Dudley," — a sentence that I filled out at my leisure.

Uncle Dan had by this time made a very good luncheon, and was looking about and inquiring, "How long does this thing hold out?"

"We are going to look in at two or three more spreads," said aunt Anne. "Suppose we take Jack Gurney's next."

Uncle Dan led us downstairs with a beautiful expression of patience and resignation.

At Jack Gurney's it was a regular family party, with neighbors from Still Waters added. The company looked a trifle tame and commonplace, — these familiar faces, and these familiar clothes! I wonder if my father saw my head was a little turned.

"Take care, Phoebe, take care!" he smiled at me.

Here were Tom and Gilbert, just through

their examinations, and looking rather tired and dull.

“Hullo, Phoebe,” said Gilbert, and seemed to have nothing more to say. He was a very every-day object to come into the brilliant scene. That was, however, a poor excuse for my conduct; I am afraid there is no name for my behavior but “airs.”

“Oh, how do you do?” This was in exact imitation of Miss Esther.

Gilbert turned away, and Tom had the bad taste to laugh. “We fellows are n’t of much account yet: don’t even know if we’ve passed. Just you wait four years.”

The fearful delights of the “Tree” were still before us. These exercises now belong to the past, but records have been preserved that will oblige posterity to believe that such things once took place. I, too, will tell what I saw.

The inclosure about the tree was banked on all sides by the flowery toilettes that had been scattered over the green. All the loveliest of summer shades and textures flowed over the raw board staging, and massed

against the dull brick walls of Hollis and Harvard.

Uncle Dan stood up, and viewed the scene on its four sides. "Now this is worth coming two hundred miles for, — all this youth and beauty."

The tree stood ready with its ring of sacrificial flowers a dozen feet from the ground. First arrived the juniors, who filed in, and dropped upon the ground; then the sophomores, amid the applause of their allies; then the freshmen, jeered at by the upper classes; and at last the seniors, — those elegant seniors, whom I had last seen in all the pride of broadcloth and beaver, now a regiment of tramps.

"Can that be my son?" cried a fond mother behind me.

"Can that be Mr. Paul?" I said to myself, spying out a hard-looking character, with hair protruding from a hole in his hat, and rags hanging at his elbows.

Then began cheering for the entire Harvard *dramatis personæ*, beginning with the president, and ending, "Three cheers for the goodies and the proctors!"

It was a tribute of hoarse barks by that time, but I knew worse things were to come, and held my breath for them. The great moment had arrived at last. The marshal tossed his hat at the flower-ringed tree ; then a rush, a scramble, a laugh, a clutching, a snatching, a desperate clambering on shoulders, to be pulled down by rivals and lost again in the writhing heap.

“ Oh, why do they allow it ? ” the distracted mother behind me kept saying. “ They will kill each other. There ’s — *blood* ! If I ever get my Henry home, safe out of college ! To have him look such a rowdy, too ! ”

The excitement rose, as the wreath of flowers dwindled to a last cluster of white carnations. I watched their fate. It was our cousin Jack Gurney who got them, and I saw one of the proud beauties of Class-day march off with the carnations nodding from the top of her parasol. I did wish I might have had one rose out of the scrimmage, and I felt what it was to be a little country girl.

“ We will go home to our hotel for tea and rest, and drive out again this evening to see

the illuminations and hear the Glee Club sing."

"Yes, let's get off home," urged uncle Dan. "It's rather a long day."

I, young and reluctant, followed them. "'A long day!' That is what it is to grow old!" was my reflection as we crossed the river.

"Ah, Mrs. Dudley, I have found you." It was evening, and Mr. Paul had recovered his respectability. "Would you like to take a little turn about the Yard?"

Mr. and Mrs. Dudley walked on in sober conversation, and Mr. Paul and I, in less sober conversation, walked just behind.

"Tell me what you thought of the tree, Miss Phœbe. I'm always after your impressions. I'm a regular interviewer."

"Oh, did you get hurt?"

"So that was your impression! Not a scratch." There was a long one on his cheek, by the way. "Here was the best I could do for you." He gave me as shabby a little rosebud as ever went into my treasure-box. I made a little nest for it in the corner of my handkerchief, and carried it softly.

“It is like fairyland,” I sighed. So said over and over the hundreds of moving people : “Fairyland ! fairyland !”

Away and away stretched the lanterns, pink and crimson and golden ; red fires were burning with a strange illumination of familiar things ; calcium lights streamed across the grass and foliage, turning them to unearthly green. It was the very witchery of light, for even red bricks lost reality, and fell under the enchantment. From the distance came music on the soft air. Before us was the elevated stage on which the Glee Club were singing.

“ ‘How can I bear to leave thee ?
One parting kiss I give thee.
And then whate’er betide me,
I go where duty calls me.
Farewell, farewell, my own true love.
Farewell, farewell, my own true love.”

Those voices singing must, it seemed, come from manly, generous, and tender hearts, so fine is the appeal and the attraction of a noble voice in man. Will he live up to its subtle promises, — the young singer ? I was thinking something like this thought as I stood silent, touched to my soul ; but as sixteen is

the age when one is most afraid of being laughed at, I said nothing of the kind.

"There 's where I belong." Mr. Paul waved his hand. "I got away for a moment."

I could only listen. As the song ended, there was frantic beckoning to my escort, and I fell back with aunt Anne.

"Fines are on yet, Armitage. This ought to be a big one."

"Fine away," Mr. Paul retorted, and we kept on our walk.

I was carried along that night on a very high wave of enthusiasm and emotion, and it swept me forward into a mighty decision.

"I am going to tell you something, Mr. Paul."

"Oh, please do."

"Well, *I* am going to college, too."

"It is n't all spreads and illuminations," Mr. Paul warned me, and put on an air of having survived great hardships.

"You think I'm a *girl*!"

"Well, yes, I had that idea."

"You think I am not worth educating!"

"I think you are all right as you are."

"Don't you know girls are going to college now, — New England girls, at any rate?" said I disagreeably.

"I saw one once in New York. She wore spectacles."

I refused any answer to this argument, a favorite one at that date.

"What do you want to read Latin and Greek for? You've got better use for your eyes."

I had to give him a look of reproof for that.

"There, did n't I say so?"

Then I laughed, which spoils an argument.

"I shan't discuss such a serious subject with you."

"I'm too frivolous?"

"I thought you cared what became of me."

"I do, tremendously."

"Well, my fate is decided."

Mr. Paul gave a very impolite groan.

I had confided in the wrong person, a common and trying experience of youth. There was a hitch in the conversation, and I talked

about Chinese lanterns, and I fear I said again that this was fairyland.

“I wish it were,” said Mr. Paul gloomily. “I’d like to get away from the real thing awhile, — if you would come, too.”

“To fairyland? I used to pretend to, when I was a little girl.”

“You will again,” said Mr. Paul, in such a melancholy voice that I laughed outright.

“Those fellows will flay me if I don’t sing with them.

‘How can I bear to leave thee, —
I go where duty calls me,’ ”

he half sang and half whispered.

Still he did not go.

“Phœbe,” spoke Mrs. Dudley from behind us, “your uncle says that we must shake hands with the president of the college.” And nothing further hindered Mr. Paul’s return to his duty.

As we came out of the president’s house, whom should we meet but Gilbert and Tom! They were trudging about together, with a modest, inquiring air; for, as Tom informed me a year or two later, there was no smaller

creature on earth than a sub-freshman. The boys joined us, and I had the high girlish satisfaction of walking between two cavaliers, the mark of the Class-day belle, as I had observed. To be sure, my pair of swains, being nothing better than a brother and a neighbor, made no pretense of bending devotedly to catch my words, but marched ahead, talking across me, and ignoring me in a way I did not propose to have continued. I determined to say something startling. I did get the attention of both when I announced, —

“I am going to college, too.”

“Whew! What has changed your mind? I believe it is Harvard College.”

My brother Tom understood me, and could often give a truer account of my conduct than I could myself. Harvard College had fired my imagination and roused my ambition: he was quite right.

Gilbert Thorne turned and looked at me.

“You can’t come to Harvard,” said Tom, in a little too lordly a tone.

“You see if I — if we don’t some time.”

“A woman ought to have all the education

she has brains for, — so ought a man,” said Gilbert slowly.

“ Please don’t discuss my brains. I’d rather you’d discuss my ribbons.”

“ Which shall it be ? Which will you girls choose finally, ribbons or brains ? ”

“ Both ! ” I answered, with fire. “ Both, to the end of the world ! ”

I heard Mrs. Dudley behind us : “ I hardly like to hurry Phœbe away.”

“ ‘ Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,’ ” answered Uncle Dan cheerfully. “ I can hold out if you can, my dear.”

At which I spoke up bravely : “ Aunt Anne, don’t you think we’d better go home now ? ”

“ It is all over,” I sighed tragically, as we seated ourselves in the carriage. Uncle Dan gave a quite different kind of sigh, and a very cheerful “ All over ! ” as we set off for home.

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The Riverside Press

*Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.
Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.*

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